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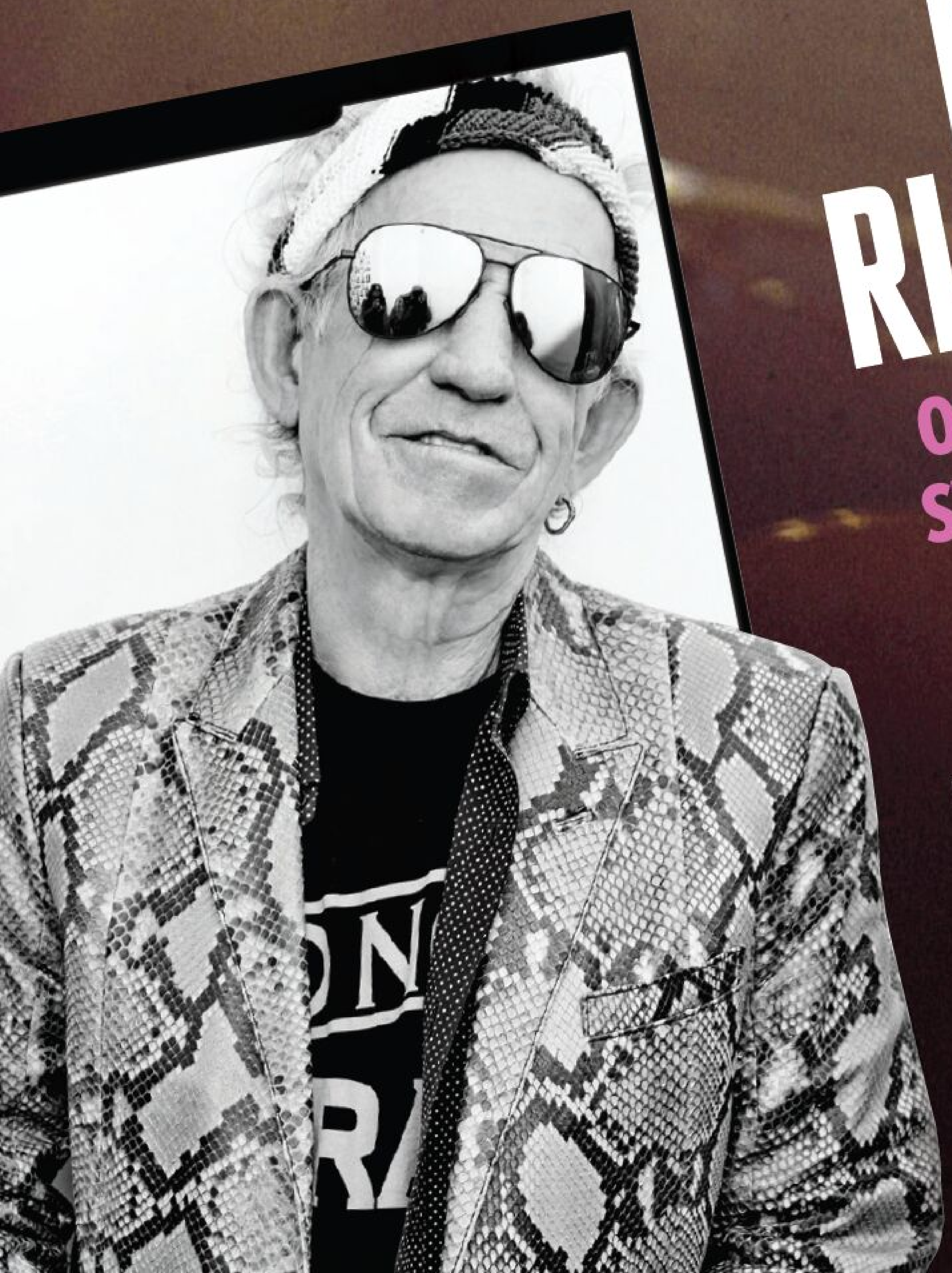

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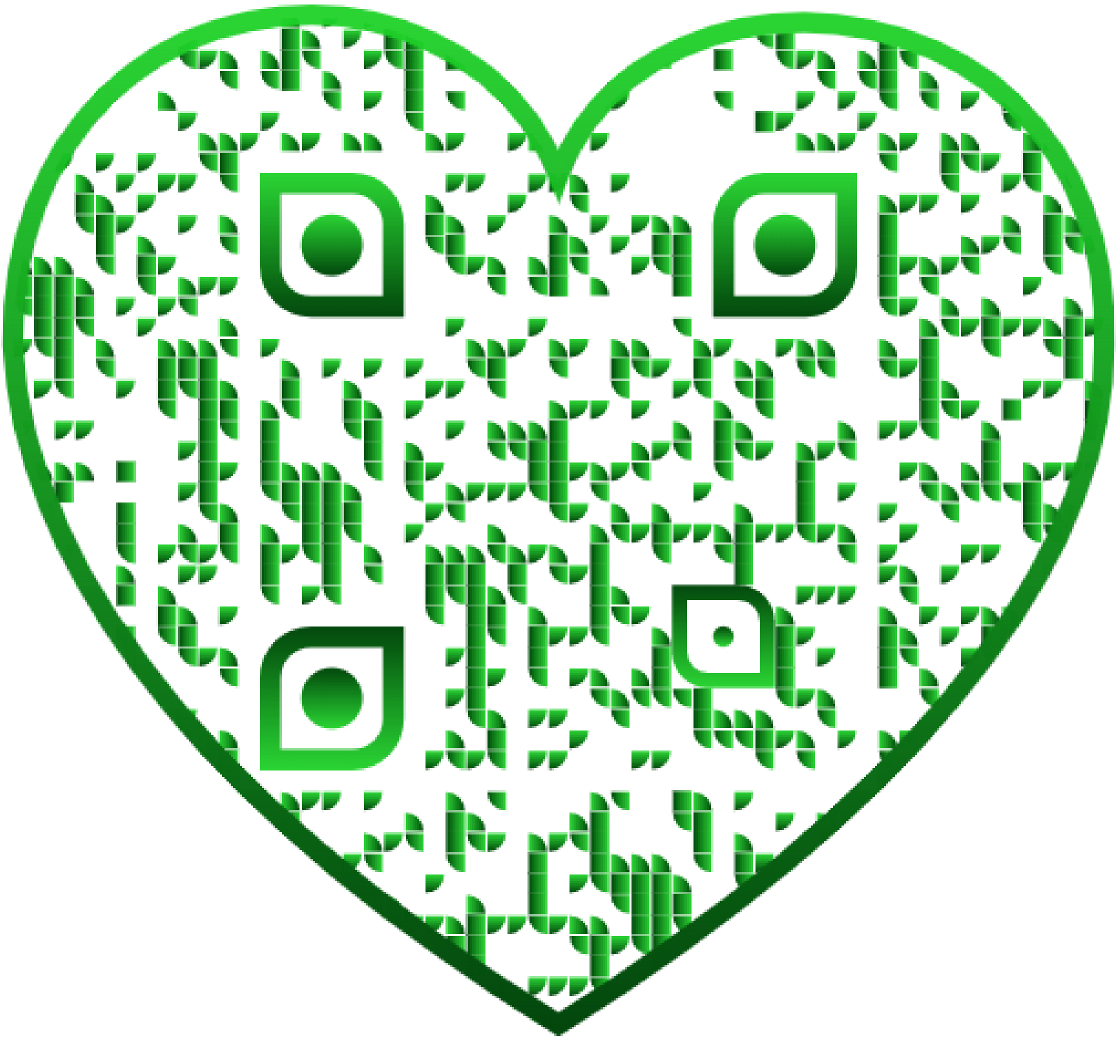

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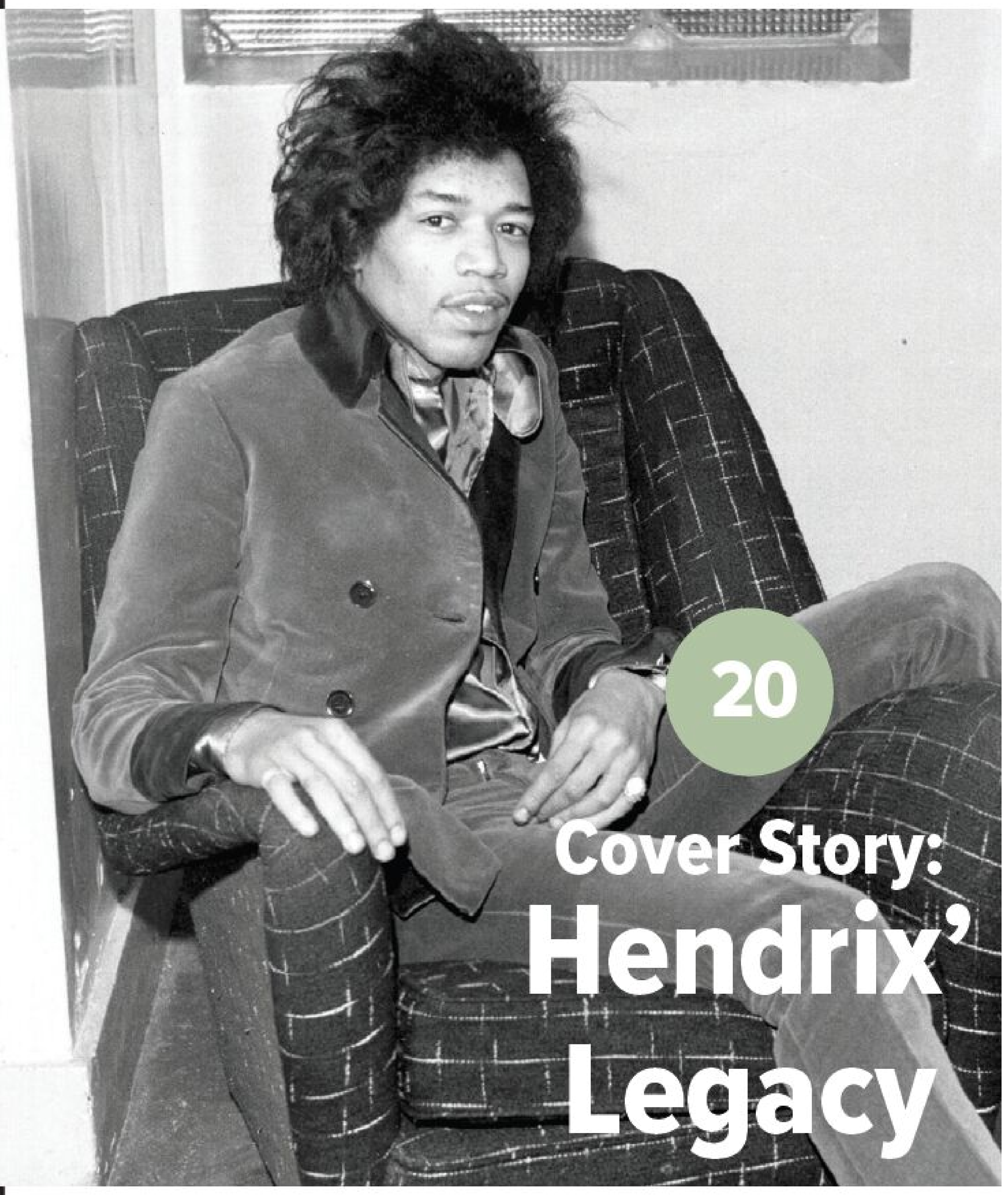

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SPOTIFY'S NEW RULES MEAN THAT OVER HALF OF ALL SONGS ON THE PLATFORM WON'T BE ELIGIBLE FOR ROYALTY PAYOUTS

Spotify is set to announce the most significant changes to its royalty model since the streaming service launched in 2008, Music Business Worldwide reports. Taking effect in Q1 2024, the most controversial of these changes will see Spotify demonetizing tracks that receive less than 1000 plays annually.

The streaming giant is planning to apply a minimum annual threshold to all songs on its platform, meaning that every track will have to generate 1000 streams before any money is paid out to the artists and rightsholders behind it. Until this point, every song played on Spotify for longer than 30 seconds generated a royalty payment: this will no longer be the case.

MBW reports that sources close to Spotify have said the company's objective with this move is to reallocate tens of millions of dollars from the 0.5% of artists on its platform that receive under 1000 streams annually to the other 99.5% of the royalty pool. Spotify estimates that due to this decision, $40 million will be redirected to those above the threshold in 2024 alone.

According to Spotify's figures, 37.5 million tracks have topped 1000 streams (1000 as an all-time total, not annually) in the history of the platform, out of the entire catalogue of over 100 million tracks. This means that close to two-thirds of all the music on Spotify has yet to reach the 1000-stream threshold and won't be generating royalties under the new rules.

In addition, Spotify is introducing other new policies to its platform next year. The most relevant aims to tackle fraud, and will see Spotify charging a penalty to distributors and labels that enable fraudulent streams. Estimates have placed the share of streams generated by fraudsters on Spotify at anywhere from 3% to 10%. **Words by Matt Mullen**

SLASH IS MAKING A GUITAR AMP WITH MAGNATONE, BUT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH MARSHALL LIVES ON

Resurgent U.S. high-end guitar amp brand Magnatone has pulled off one of the biggest coups in electric guitar history, announcing a partnership with Guns N' Roses' Slash, who will have a new-look backline when he tours the States with Myles Kennedy and the Conspirators. But don't worry: Slash's longterm partnership with Marshall has not come to an end.

Indeed, after a few days of uncertainty last month, Slash was compelled to release a statement confirming that the Magnatone deal won't affect his arrangement with Marshall. It certainly would have been a significant shake up of the status quo. Slash was, after all, Marshall's first-ever signature artist, and has been loyal to a suite of Silver Jubilee heads over the years, as well as his AFD100 Appetite For Destruction model.

In a statement, Slash said: "To clear up any misconceptions that might arise, although Magnatone and I have been working together to create a new Amp, I still maintain my long relationship with Marshall and look forward to continued collaboration with their incredible team."

In the initial announcement, Slash sang Magnatone's praises. "I used a Magnatone 50-watt M-80 in the studio earlier this year and was blown away by how it sounded," he said. "Since then, I've been working with Magnatone on a 100-watt version of the M-80 and I absolutely love what they have come up with. It's killer."

It won't be long before that amp gets a release, either: according to the brand itself, it's slated for a release early next year, so you can be sure Slash will take one on the road when he goes on tour with Myles Kennedy and the Conspirators. **Words by Matt Owen and Shaun Prescott**

THE EDGE DITCHES TUBE AMPS FOR UNIVERSAL AUDIO'S UAFX PEDALS FOR U2'S SPHERE RESIDENCY

After speculation recently surfaced on the internet, The Edge has now confirmed he's ditched his suite of tube amps in favor of digital amp emulators for U2's ongoing string of Las Vegas Sphere shows.

Rumours of the U2 guitarist's significant rig shakeup began circulating earlier this week, with Ultimate Guitar sharing snaps of what looked to be a new-look version of The Edge's pedalboard that housed the Universal UAFX Audio Ruby, Woodrow and Dream pedals. For those unfamiliar with the UAFX range, these three units are all pedal amps based on British, American and Tweed amps, all of which offer onboard speaker cab options.

It was a curious picture indeed, with many suggesting that the Edge – a long-term loyalist of the tube amp contingent and champion of a Vox AC30, Fender Deluxe and Fender Harvard setup – had defected to the ranks of digital amp emulators.

In a statement issued to MusicRadar, The Edge confirmed, "For various reasons at the Sphere I decided to switch from amplifiers to digital amp emulators. I'm using UA Ruby, Dream and Woodrow amp pedals with some Fractal Axe-Fx units handling additional amp emulation and FX. When you introduce radio leads and all the electronics involved it's never the same as a simple guitar into amp tone, so it's a case of high-level complexity to make it sound simple." **Words by Matt Owen**

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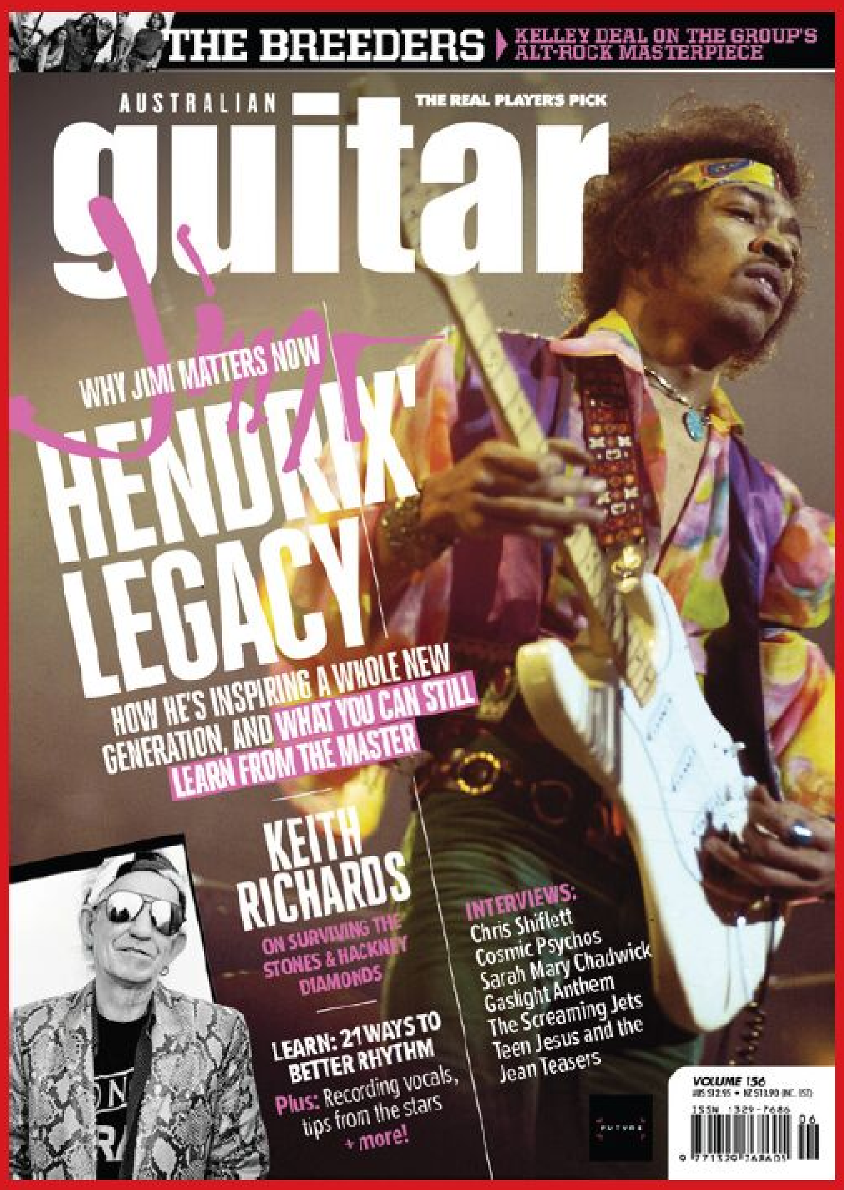

On the cover: Jimi Hendrix (1942-1970) performs live on stage playing a white Fender Stratocaster guitar with The Jimi Hendrix Experience at the Royal Albert Hall in London on 24th February 1969. (Getty/David Redfern/Redferns)

#156

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FUTURE

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FROM SOCCER PRACTICE TO STADIUM ROCK

FOO FIGHTERS' LONGTIME LEAD GUITARIST **CHRIS SHIFLETT** MAY APPEAR TO BE ONE OF THE LEAST LIKELY COMPETITORS FOR THE TITLE OF COUNTRY MUSIC STAR, BUT HIS THIRD SOLO ALBUM *LOST AT SEA* BEARS A GENUINE NASHVILLE SOUND WITH A DASH OF PUNK ROCK. AG EXPLORES ITS ORIGINS.

WORDS BY **CORIN SHEARSTON**. LEAD PHOTO BY **JOEY MARTINEZ**.

At age 13, Chris Shiflett made a decision that would forever alter the course of his life. He had been playing soccer for two years, but decided to change his career path to music. As a big-haired heavy metal kid, Shiflett idolised Ozzy Osbourne's legendary shredder, Randy Rhoads, and learned to rock on a black Takamine Explorer. He joined his first band at the age of 14, in 1985. Another 14 years later, in 1999, he auditioned for the role of lead guitarist in Foo Fighters during his four-year tenure with punk rockers No Use For A Name. In his 2021 memoir, The Storyteller, Dave Grohl praises Shiflett as "the man who saved our band in our most desperate time of need".

Three months after the tragic and untimely death of their longtime drummer, Taylor Hawkins, Foo Fighters released their latest album on June 2, 2023 - the poignant But Here We Are, with Dave Grohl behind the studio kit. In the years previous, when Hawkins was still living life like "a tornado of hyperactive joy", in Grohl's words, Foo Fighters would record a Bee Gees tribute album and make a horror movie, Studio 666, with a complementary thrash metal record, Dream Widow.

Meanwhile, Chris Shiflett had always searched for other realms of musical creativity, with a series of experiments that began when he formed the punk act Jackson United in 2003. Shiflett then stepped out as an artist with a backing band in 2010, and from 1997 to 2014, he also contributed to eleven varied cover albums released by Me First And The Gimme Gimmes, a punk rock supergroup and cover act featuring Fat Mike from NOFX, (a longtime fan of No Use For A Name).

Shiflett has now finished the third addition to his discography as a solo artist, Lost At Sea, which was largely recorded in Nashville. Being a historical hotbed for the country-western sound that Shiflett's solo albums are partially inspired by, it's also the birthplace of The Grand Ole Opry, an iconic country music radio show which is nearly one century old. Shiflett has now performed a handful of Grand Ole Opry shows himself. As a world-touring husband and father who has now walked in the footsteps of Johnny Cash, Hank Williams and Dolly Parton, Shiflett remains warm-hearted and endlessly curious. This is evident in his new podcast, Shred With Shifty. Having sat down to play and discuss guitar with members of Rush, Weezer and Chic, after his earlier podcast Walking The Floor, Shiflett will tour Australia and New Zealand with Foo Fighters between late November 2023 and January 2024, with local supports. He'll also be performing two intimate acoustic shows as a soloist in Melbourne and Sydney in early December, in support of Lost At Sea. Coming full circle on a recent podcast episode, Shiflett revealed that the album's limited-edition release bundle included an Arsenal-coloured soccer scarf. He sat down with Australian Guitar for a fun and detailed discussion.

After growing up in the Californian punk scene and joining a stadium rock band, how did country-Americana music become an important musical focus for you?

To some extent, a bit of that was always there. It just became something I was drawn to. It kind of started with Americana stuff, alt-country, or whatever you want to call it. As you do when you get into stuff, you want to hear what influenced the people you like, what influenced those people, and so on. Country music is so vast. There's so much to sift through and so many different sounds and styles that you could spend your lifetime obsessing on it, and still not really cover it all.

Does country music's tough lyrical realness appeal to you too?

I think it's just a much more direct way of writing lyrics. It doesn't leave a lot to the imagination. Country music hangs it all out there. It's maybe a little less poetic and a little more on the nose, stylistically. That's certainly a part of what drew me to it. Especially when you get into the really great writers like Merle Haggard, who I consider a big influence. You sort of aspire to that level of being able to whittle out all the fluff in your lyrics. I don't feel like I ever really achieved that, but I try.

When you recorded the album in Nashville, was that your first time recording there?

I actually made West Coast Town and Hard Lessons out in Nashville as well. [2017's] West Coast Town was the first record I ever made out there. We had recorded a Foo Fighters song for [2014's]

Sonic Highways out there too, but that was the first time I ever recorded any of my own stuff in Nashville and worked with people that were based there. [Lost At Sea producer] Jaren Johnston and all those other cats are amazing parts of that Nashville music scene. I've gotten to know a lot of people out there, a lot of musicians and folks that are in the music industry, so I'm drawn to it as a place where I want to work. Through making those records, I got to know some of the go-to guys. This album started with wanting to work with Jaren, who assembled all the players for the record. It's a very different [experience there]. We recorded the basic tracks in that Nashville style of scheduling three hour blocks of time, where you're trying to bang out as much as you can in these little windows. The beauty of that is that the session players who work in that scene are used to it and function really well in that. The beauty of this album was recording in Nashville and taking stuff home to tinker with and change.

Your new single 'Damage Control' uses an interesting reggae-like groove - what inspired that?

It was inspired by The Clash. That's the only song that was kind of old. We wrote everything else on the record right before we recorded them, or even between sessions. When you go and record songs with a bunch of great players, they evolve and become something different.

I imagine it's going to be one of the songs that you play in your two December solo shows in our country?

Yeah man, I'm excited because those are gonna be solo acoustic. I'm not gonna have my band with me. Those are always fun, because you have to figure out how to strip the songs back and turn them into just a guy with an acoustic guitar, which can be challenging, but it's fun. Those shows tend to be very intimate.

What type of attitude do you bring to playing solo acoustic shows, as opposed to large stadium shows with Foo Fighters?

Well, even playing with my band is just so different, because it's a full band experience. The thing is, at acoustic shows you're just so much closer to the crowd, and you're interacting with the crowd in a different way. Playing in little bars and stuff, you can see the whites of everybody's eyes and it can be so rewarding and fun, but if you're not in your groove it can be really nerve wracking too.

Congrats on playing The Grand Ole Opry in 2019. Was that with a band, or with a small ensemble, or was it just you?

I've actually played The Grand Ole Opry around three or four times now, and it's been a little different each time. The last time I did it was around 2022. I had recorded a single called 'Long Long Year' with Sierra Hull, who played mandolin and sang on it. She came and sang with me, which was super fun. Most every time I've done it, I've played with The Opry's house band who are great: they always like learning your song perfectly, but I've done different little things. I remember last time, since Sierra was coming out, and she's from that bluegrass world, I said 'we've gotta do a bluegrass song - corral some of your bluegrass friends and let's try that'. That was really fun. We did the Jimmy Martin version of 'Truck Drivin' Man'. For other times I've played at The Opry, I'm pretty sure I've always done it with the house band, but I sometimes bring in other friends.

You've also got a new podcast now. The first three shows of Shred With Shifty feature an eclectic cast of guitarists - Alex Lifeson from Rush, Rivers Cuomo from Weezer and Nile Rodgers from Chic. How long had you been wanting to talk to some of these guys for?

Oh man, I have been listening to some of these guys for my whole life, practically. I've been listening to people like Alex Lifeson since I was nine years old. I'm glad you mentioned that there's a range of genres because that was something that I set out to do - not have it just be one kind of narrow thing. With Walking The Floor, as much as I enjoyed that, and did branch out at times [with chats to members of Mötley Crüe, Madness and The Stray Cats, for example], it was mostly focused on country music and Americana. So for this one, I wanted it to be all over the shop. Of course you want to talk to the people that you grew up listening to, that's always a priority. You also want to put feelers out and see who some of the other guitar players out there are, that we could get on. I couldn't believe we got Nile Rodgers. That was so cool, and such a great interview. That guy's such a badass. In that first round of interviews, we really got some great guests, so it's been really exciting. I hope we keep building on that. The biggest thrill of the whole thing is learning. With each interview, I probably pick up a lick or two that I can add to my quiver.

I see you grew up as a bit of a heavy metal kid in the '80s?

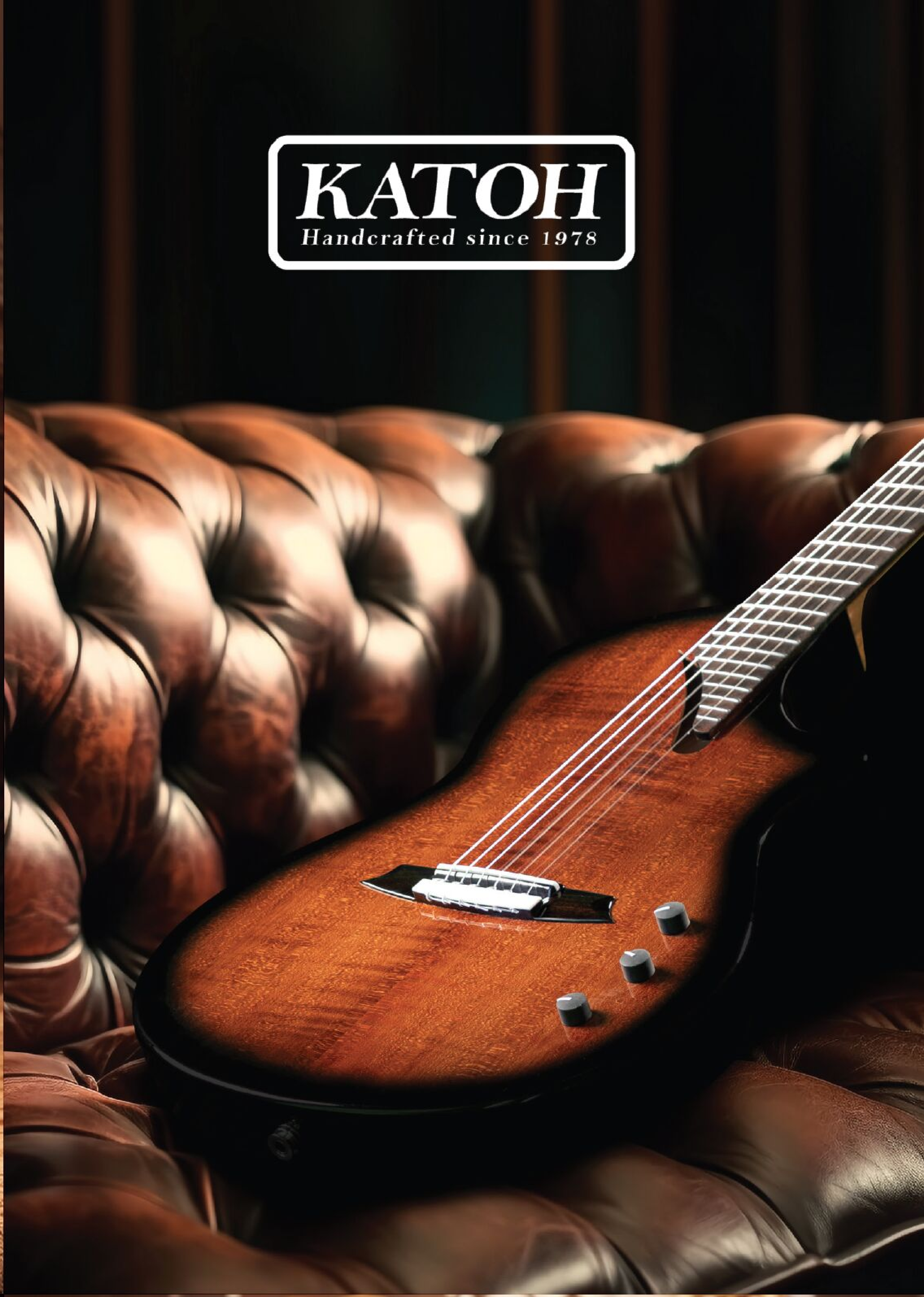
Heavy metal stuff was big in our house for sure. I loved Randy Rhoads, for example. I actually had a shirt made at the mall when I was in seventh grade that said, in very big letters, 'RANDY RHOADS IS GOD'. Most of the kids in my school didn't know who Randy Rhoads was. I remember this kid coming up to me, who thought that I was Randy Rhoads or something and that I was declaring that about mysel]. He's like, 'you're not God, man, you're not'.

Looking ahead to your 2023-2024 Australia/New Zealand tour with Foo Fighters, I view you guys booking younger rock and punk acts as your supports as a sign that you're still in touch with your punk rock roots, considering that you played in No Use For A Name, Pat Smear played in The Germs, your new drummer Josh Freese played in The Vandals, and Dave Grohl grew up in the punk scene too. What do you think?

Our promoter down there, Frontier Touring, always connects us with some great bands. Amyl & The Sniffers, for example. I always love it when I see young bands out there playing rock 'n' roll music. It makes me happy. I especially love when I see something that I don't quite understand, but I'm old, so I'm not supposed to. I just love the fact that it's out there.

Chris Shiflett's *Lost At Sea* LP is out now. Shiflett will play solo shows and with Foo Fighters throughout Australia in December.

TOP: KEVIN NIXON / TOTAL GUITAR | BOTTOM: ADAM GASSON / GUITARIST



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COLD ONES & LOUD FUN

CULT AUSSIE PUNK SENSATIONS (THE) **COSMIC PSYCHOS** RECENTLY CELEBRATED 40 YEARS AS A BAND - A FEAT MADE EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE BY THE FACT THAT THEIR SINGER-BASSIST STILL VIEWS HIMSELF AS A FARMER. AUSTRALIAN GUITAR HOPPED ON OUR TRACTORS TO REFLECT ON THE TRIO'S BEER-DRENCHED LEGACY.

WORDS BY **CORIN SHEARSTON**.

From a dressing room in Idaho, Cosmic Psychos' bassist and vocalist Ross Knight, AKA 'Knighty', reflects on his band reaching their remarkable 40th anniversary in 2023. "They forgot about that bit in the farming manual", he explains, with his trademark dry irreverence. "There's a bit at the back that says you gotta play in a punk band". While still working as a farmer in central Victoria, Knighty's parallel career as a frequently-touring punk rock larrikin continues to be the integral force behind the eleven studio albums, three live albums, two EPs and one compilation released by the Cosmic Psychos between 1985 and 2021. Best known for their unapologetic drinking anthem 'Nice Day To Go To The Pub', other fuzzy Psychos live standards include 'Lost Cause', 'Pub', and 'Custom Credit', which thunder along menacingly with their descriptions of wild women, alcoholism and lyrics mentioning southbound trams, pubs, meat pies, spiders, and more pubs.

While occasionally confounding foreign listeners, the Melbourne-born trio's uniquely Australian angle has won over many appreciative converts during the last 40 years, including Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder, (the) Melvins' Buzz Osborne, and Garbage drummer/Nirvana producer Butch Vig. Vig produced the Psychos' third album Blokes You Can Trust in 1991, shortly before the release of Nevermind. The album would become the namesake of the band's 2013 documentary, which chronicled the unlikely rise of the band from beer-loving underground heroes to beer-loving cult sensations - a key influence on modern bogan punk stalwarts like The Chats and Amyl & The Sniffers. Since 2006, the two other longtime members in the Psychos have been drummer Dean Muller and guitarist John 'Mad Macka' McKeering. Macka's laidback Queenslander personality helped to make for a delightful interview, which even included two brief cameos from Knighty and Dean.

Do you feel like the Psychos have influenced other rowdy, beer-loving punk bands, like your friends The Chats?

MM: I don't know. I'm sure we've influenced some things but a lot of things influence a lot of things.

I read that you've been in the Psychos for 17 years, but what are your thoughts on helping to lead the band into its 40th anniversary?

MM: It's good. It's 40 years, and that's really good. It should be a lot of fun. If it wasn't fun, I wouldn't do it.

How long have you been playing guitar for, now?

MM: I started playing in September 1989. When I told the girl I was going out with that I was gonna be in a band, she wasn't impressed.

How did the Psychos first hear about you in the '90s?

MM: Well, [my previous band] The Onyas, through [Melbourne music scene figure] Bruce Milne, talked to the drummer [Bill Walsh] at the time, and we ended up going on tour with 'em in Europe for about twelve gigs in 1996. From there, we had a connection, one thing led to another, and I ended up playing in the band [after former guitarist Robbie 'Rocket' Watts passed away from a sudden heart attack in 2006]. [Before I joined] we also did a Melvins/Cosmic Psychos/Onyas tour in Australia, so there were several different things that happened.

When you're touring these days, what guitars do you mainly use on stage?

MM: At the moment I'm using a Fender Strat from around 1979 as a backup, and I'm using a Gretsch Malcolm Young signature model with only one pickup. It's a TV Jones pickup and it bloody goes really well. They're really good because [Young] pulled the pickups out of it, so it's got this resonance through the body of the guitar.

How do you get your tone, onstage? Do you use distortion, or overdrive?

MM: I've got a Big Muff. It all depends on what guitar you're gonna use. When you're playing with Humbuckers, it's a bit different. The Gretsch has Humbuckers, but the Strat is a single coil. I don't really know how I get the tone. I turn the amp up halfway and sort it out from there.

What's your beer of choice when you're Down Under?

MM: Probably Coopers Red. I also like coffee in the morning and I try to drink water the rest of the time.

So in 2015, for the *Cum The Raw Prawn* album, you made your mark as a vocalist by singing 'Fuckwit City'. What, in your mind, was the city in question?

MM: It could be anywhere, and that's about where it sits. It depends on where the fuckwits are. Stay positive and it'll diminish.

Cosmic Psychos have pulled some legendary pranks in the past. I saw on the *Blokes You Can Trust* documentary that, in the '90s, Knighty once swapped the signs between the bathroom and the dressing room for Helmet. So Helmet walked into the bathroom thinking it was their dressing room.

MM: My synopsis of that situation was they were a bit confused.

Ross Knight AKA Knighty: That was a pretty funny one. We still do the odd prank every now and again. We just fly very much under the radar now. No one suspects these old men to do anything naughty. We don't do anything bad. We just do the occasional naughty one. The thing is you just never hang around for the prank if you can help it. We just go slow and steady nowadays. It's almost always gonna be a long night, and there's another day tomorrow. You've gotta pace yourself.

Congrats on the 40th anniversary as well, that's big stuff.

K: Yeah, it's unreal.

For a farmer to be touring the world in a punk band?

K: Well we have done for 40 years. When you read the farming manual, there's a bit of the back that says you've gotta play in a punk band.

As I heard you sing in some lyrics on 2020's *Loudmouth Soup*, you drive your ute with a can in your hand - that's what farmers do when they play in a punk band.

K: Absolutely. It's my favourite thing to do in life mate, drive around the farm in my ute in low ratio four wheel drive with an esky beside me, and look at the world as I see it.

Have you guys been playing any new stuff off 2021's *Mountain Of Piss*, or *Loudmouth Soup*, at your recent shows?

Dean Muller: We've just been doing the 'greatest hits catalogue'. All the usual suspects sort of thing. We'll probably work some [more recent] ones in soon.

In late 2017, ABC News uploaded a short doco about the guitar school you were running at your home in Brisbane. How is that going?

MM: Yeah, it still goes. It's been slow lately, but it goes. Send me a message and we'll sort it out.

Have you guys been talking about making a follow-up to *Mountain Of Piss*?

MM: Yeah, we're getting there. Don't rush us, but we'll get there.

Cosmic Psychos' 40th anniversary shows hit the Theatre Royal in Melbourne on Dec 1, 2 and 3. Supports include The Chats and Boondall Boys.

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KIWI MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST **SARAH MARY CHADWICK** RELEASED HER EIGHTH STUDIO ALBUM, *MESSAGES TO GOD*, IN SEPTEMBER. AUSTRALIAN GUITAR BECAME IMMERSED IN HER MYSTERIOUS MUSICAL WORLD.

WORDS BY **CORIN SHEARSTON**. PHOTO BY **SIMON J KARIS**.

She has a bold, arresting voice, a history of interesting instrument usage, including flute, cello and pipe organ, and eight albums of uniquely layered compositions. Sarah Mary Chadwick's sunny disposition is definitely at odds with the deeply personal songs she is known for, which often describe familial issues and mental health struggles, written through an artistic lens clouded by complex feelings and viewed through hindsight. As the creator of many slow-burning songs, which hold their listeners through lyrics that veer from being questioning to confessional while offering moments of wry humour and motivation, Chadwick has worked as a solo recording artist for over ten years.

Since her 2012 debut, *Eating For Two*, she has recorded albums in band-ensemble settings, such as 2020's *Please Daddy*, as well as solo, such as 2021's *Me And Ennui Are Friends, Baby*. Meanwhile, 2019's *The Queen Who Stole The Sky* was recorded on the grand (pipe) organ in Melbourne Town Hall - the largest of its kind in the southern hemisphere. "I always try [to] make friends with instruments", she explains.

Chadwick grew up in the small town of Tamaranui on the north island of New Zealand, before moving to Wellington and then settling in Melbourne, while serving as the frontwoman and guitarist for gloomy alt-noise rockers, Batrider. She joined us from Melbourne for an honest chat about her creative processes.

Does lyric writing help you to make better sense of the world and your relationships within it? How, if so?

It's not something that I [think of], consciously. I kind of write them and then understand them later. Maybe I'll be talking to my psych or a friend and then I'll realise what I meant when I wrote a lyric. I feel like I always understand better in hindsight.

One of your earlier albums, *The Queen Who Stole The Sky*, was entirely performed on the largest organ in the Southern Hemisphere. What inspired that idea?

That was a commissioned work from the Melbourne City Council. I think they wanted to encourage people to use it in a contemporary setting. For that project, I had to write a report, and I wrote all the record for the instrument. I performed it as well, and they recorded it. That was a really good project for me. Usually I write a lot [of songs] and then pick my favourites, but that album was done in such a short time that I didn't have time to enact quality control over the songwriting. I think I maybe wrote two extra songs that I didn't use. Again, in hindsight, I really like all those songs. I think they're really strong. I think if I had been given more time, I might have made different choices around which ones to use, and maybe that wouldn't have been beneficial.

The experience of playing that massive instrument must have been pretty incredible, right?

It was amazing. Sometimes if I'm recording, or there's a show with a special instrument, I always try and make friends with the instrument. With that organ in particular, it was so overwhelming that it was funny to play, because the pipes were over my head. I was hearing it bounce off the back wall when I was sitting under it. I had to really try to be in control of it. I didn't want it to look like it was in control of me. I think if I had been more intimidated by it, then it wouldn't have worked.

After learning to play the piano as your first instrument, what inspired you to learn guitar?

It felt easier for me to articulate myself and interpret other people's songs. When I was [in my late teens], everyone really liked The Strokes and bands like that, so playing guitar was a bit cooler than playing keys. My first solo record was half guitar, half keys, and there's guitar on other ones as well. Around 2012, I leant back into playing keys more.

So for *Messages To God*, did you write most of the songs on piano, or on guitar?

I did record some guitar songs, but it made more sense for the album to be more cohesive, and for me to use all the piano-based songs. On *Messages To God*, there are two other guys playing on it, Ben Edgar, and James Mangohig - they're producer guys. Ben did a lot of lap steel and treated guitars, as well as a lot of the textural stuff. They re-amped a lot of it, and put a lot of effects on a lot of it, along with re-amping a lot of synthesisers. My friend Tony Espie did most of the main production. A lot of the textural stuff that the other two producer guys did was directed by Tony, who arranged things.

Something else that stands out to me are your hand-painted album covers, which you make for all of your records. Why do you do this?

It's strange when people always use other people's artwork for their albums. It would be strange for me, unless the artist was someone that I really trusted and knew really well. I'm someone that's inspired by the songs, so I want to bring something more to them. Even if it's not conscious, it's still coming from the same place, because that's all I have.

I read that, since 2015, you've wanted to make an album every year to give more structure to each year. How was that process impacted by COVID-19?

It's not so much that I do one-a-year for the year, but I didn't release one in 2022 and I noticed that my whole year was a bit nebulous. I felt a bit anxious because I didn't really feel like I had much going on. But when COVID hit, I was accidentally a genius because I had recorded two records in 2019. So then, Please Daddy came out at the beginning of 2020, and then I couldn't record, but I already had the other one anyway. I put out *Me And Ennui Are Friends, Baby* at the beginning of 2021. Basically, I had a really terrible time in 2019 and had heaps of feelings to sing about, so I recorded two records in 2019, and that saved me through COVID. It was totally worth it.

Have you been busy with gigs recently?

This year, my focus has shifted a little bit. I recorded another record down at Frying Pan Studios at MOMA in Hobart a few months ago which will come out around September 2024, so I've been a bit more focused on recording and visual art, rather than playing live.

When you do play gigs, do you have a go-to guitar?

I've always played my pink Japanese Stratocaster, it's like a Jimi Hendrix reissue. I got it from my family for my 21st birthday present. When I went to the Rock Shop in Wellington, when I lived there, I literally would have bought any piece of shit if it was pink. It was very lucky that the pink guitar my family heard was actually a really good guitar. I've played identical ones, and none of them sound as good as my one.

Sarah Mary Chadwick's *Messages to God* is out now via Kill Rock Stars.

BITTERSWEET FIXATIONS

AFTER A HIATUS OF ALMOST TEN YEARS, SOULFUL NEW JERSEY ROCKERS **THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM** RETURN WITH THEIR LATEST STUDIO ALBUM, *HISTORY BOOKS*. AUSTRALIAN GUITAR DUG INTO ITS STORY.

WORDS BY **CORIN SHEARSTON**, LEAD PHOTO BY **KELSEY HUNTER AYRES**

In the heartland American punk-rock gospel of The Gaslight Anthem, you "ain't supposed to die on a Saturday night". So sang a 28-year old Brian Fallon in 2008, on the title track of what many consider to be his group's magnum opus - *The '59 Sound*. In 2009, sales of *The '59 Sound* doubled after the group were hastily joined onstage at June's Glastonbury festival by a fellow son of New Jersey - Bruce Springsteen. They performed a rendition of 'The '59 Sound' that marked a highpoint in the band's career at the time, and a reinvention of a song that Fallon first wrote while sitting on his mother's bedroom floor.

A 15-year old Fallon had started writing his first songs 13 years prior to the release of *The '59 Sound*, which he recorded live at cafes and compiled for a 1997 cassette called *The Coffeehouse Sessions*. Since those early days Fallon has made ten albums with and without The Gaslight Anthem, alongside five other short-lived recording projects, including The Horrible Crowes. The Gaslight Anthem's latest album *History Books* was released on October 27, nine years after their previous release, 2014's *Get Hurt*. While the lyrics of *Get Hurt* were largely fueled by a divorce that Fallon lived through, *History Books* presents a more varied palette of inspiration. Topics include Fallon's current mental health journey and associated experiences with therapy and medication, joyous reflections on surviving hardships and living in the now [see: 'Positive Charge'] and bitterness about not putting up personal boundaries, such as on the album's title track, which features a vocal performance from Bruce Springsteen. With characteristic lyrical openness and honesty, coupled with uplifting stadium rock riffs, the positive charge of *History Books* has made its impact.

Over time, Fallon reconsidered the 2015 decision to leave his group in the position of being on an indefinite hiatus, with the globally unprecedented effects of COVID-19 demonstrating that our time on earth can be short, and that it's best to enjoy life while one can. In Fallon's case, the announcement of The Gaslight Anthem's reunion in March 2022 signifies his enduring joy for creating music with his old bandmates, guitarist Alex Rosamilia, drummer Benny Horowitz, and bassist Alex Levine, aided once again by Bruce Springsteen, who became a sounding-board and mentor for Fallon during a beneficial meeting about the group's future in 2021. The album that

resulted from the decision to reform was recorded across five months in Tarquin Studios, Connecticut, with the studio's owner and chief producer Peter Katis (The National, Interpol, Gang Of Youths). Brian Fallon recently spoke to Australian Guitar from Idaho, about the making of *History Books*, the album's thematic inspirations, and the resurrection of The Gaslight Anthem.

One of your new songs 'Michigan, 1975' is inspired by a 1993 novel, The Virgin Suicides, about five doomed sisters - what was it about that book and its movie that resonated so strongly with you?

I thought it was pretty profound. Whereas most people spend their lives growing up thinking about getting on the sports team, or who they're gonna date, you have these girls who are dealing with their own kind of heaviness. They're dealing with things on a much more real level of survival or not surviving, and they're putting an end to their lives before they even begin. It's hard for me to keep my mind on whatever's right in front of me, so I related to their story of how they were thinking about mortality and depression while everybody else around them were just going on with their teenage lives. It's such a parallel, you know. I think that when you feel the way that they did in the book, you just want to be normal, but you realise the more you're around normal people, how not normal you are.

I also sense a parallel in the music of The Gaslight Anthem, where the songs have a profound effect on people and are uplifting and cathartic, but are lyrically based around dark personal struggles. Do you see that balance working in the new album?

I think it's one of the things that we've always done. I think it's tough to write about good things. When you're living in the good times, you don't want to write because you're busy having fun. I guess we've written about some good things, but they're less interesting, to be honest. When I was a kid, I would hear a pop song on the radio and be like, "okay, cool, whatever", you know. Especially in the '80s, it seemed so hollow, but then a friend would be like, "Yo, I just got [Ozzy Osbourne's] *Bark At The Moon*, or [Slayer's] *Reign In Blood*", we would play it and we'd be like, "oh my God, this is scary". That was cooler, you know? When I was hearing happy love songs, bands like the Misfits were much more interesting.

Considering your band's strong grounding in American musical culture, why were parts of *History Books* recorded in Dublin?

Well, we recorded it in America, but Bruce [Springsteen] recorded his part [on the 'History Books' single] in Dublin as he was on tour when we sent that song to him. The whole thing started when I was talking to him one time while we were sitting down and eating pizza. After I went home, he texted me an hour later, and he was really excited because I had told him that [The Gaslight Anthem] were gonna get back together and make a record. He said, "OK, you gotta write a song for the two of us, [and we'll] sing on it, it'll be great". I said, "alright, cool". When we had 'History Books' done, everybody thought it would sound great if he sang the second verse on that. So I called him up and said, "hey, do you still want to do that song?"He said, "yeah, but I'm on tour, [so] can you send it to me?" So our producer Peter Katis sent the whole Pro Tools file to a studio in Dublin, [as Bruce] was in Dublin on tour. He recorded his vocal there, and then he sent it back to us. That's how it happened.

So the bulk of the album was recorded in the US, then?

Yeah, we recorded the whole thing in the States, in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Y'know that documentary about all those New York bands, like Interpol, called Meet Me In The Bathroom? It's about the New York scene in the early 2000s. Well, Interpol did their first two records at the same place. The National probably did their first five records there. It's kind of a legendary indie studio, it's really cool. Kurt Vile goes up there, [along with] all these cool bands, but in an old Victorian-era house. You would never know it's a studio. It's called Tarquin Studios.

The release of *History Books* marks the end of nearly a ten-year-long gap between The Gaslight Anthem's albums. How do you feel about that?

It's pretty refreshing because it proved to us that we could still do it, which we were worried about after that much time. The biggest fear is that nothing works anymore. We did a show with the Misfits recently, after they had gotten back together. They were cool, and the show was great, but I started thinking, "I wonder why there's no new music". I guess Doyle [Wolfgang Von Frankenstein, guitar] does music, but how come there's no music with Glenn [Danzig, vocals]? I don't know the answer to that. So we didn't want to get back together just to play our old songs. We wanted to do new ones. That was part of the deal, and I'm glad that it worked. We all feel pretty relieved about it.

Have you guys been taking any of these new songs out on the road?

We've started playing the four that are out, 'Little Fires', 'History Books', 'Positive Charge', and 'Autumn'. We try not to play too many live in the same show. We switch them up every night. Sometimes we'll play one and then another one, but we also play a ton of old stuff, too. We know that nobody wants to hear the whole new record right away. Once you put out a new record, I think you have to give people a year or two to get used to it. We play one or two, maybe three, if we're playing for a long time, but then we hit them with all the bangers.

Do you prefer playing in larger venues, or do you still like smaller clubs?

We try to mix it up. There's things we enjoy about both. We still do multiple nights at smaller venues to try and not forget how it felt [in the early days] and have some fun. But there's also something special about playing in a big place, like at a place like Wembley. It's pretty special to see that many people all singing, 'The '59 Sound', because I wrote that song on my mom's bedroom floor with a little guitar. At the same time, playing in small places gives you a real sense of community.

Speaking of being right there, when you guys recorded *History Books* were you all in the one room playing and looking at each other? Or was it pieced together through overdubs and multitracking?

A little bit of both, because that's the way that [our producer] Peter [Katis] works. He did different things for each song. We had the live room, where we were all set up, and we would go and play together. Then there's the control room, where Peter had all the mixers and computers. Sometimes it could just be me and Benny recording guitar and drums at the same time, before [Alex Levine] added in the bass. A lot of the guitar stuff was added in later, because it was so intricate, especially Alex [Rosamilia's] stuff. He was using a couple of different amps, and a bunch of different effects over each other. You almost couldn't get a clean sound if you did it live, because there would be too much audio bleeding.

You put out five solo works between 2016 to 2021, and your side project The Horrible Crowes was active from 2011 to 2013, as a duo with guitarist Ian Perkins. Has there been any discussion about reforming The Horrible Crowes, too?

We've talked about it a couple of times, but I don't know what we would do. We feel like the record [Elsie, from 2011] is so special that we don't know how we could do another one. It's really hard when you make a record and it's so good. Plus, I can only usually do one thing at a time. When I'm working on stuff with The Gaslight Anthem, that's all I'm doing. I feel like if there's anything else I need to do, I could probably just do it with whatever group I'm currently involved in. Then I start thinking about what a new song in the style of the Horrible Crowes would sound like with The Gaslight Anthem. That to me is exciting.

Gaslight Anthem's *History Books* is out now.

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FLYING HIGH AGAIN

NOW 33 YEARS INTO THEIR HARD-ROCKING CAREER, **THE SCREAMING JETS** ARE POWERING ON THROUGH 2023 WITH THEIR TENTH ALBUM IN TOW, *PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT*. AUSTRALIAN GUITAR FASTENED OUR SEATBELTS TO FLY INTO A REVEALING NEW INTERVIEW WITH GUITARIST JIMI 'THE HUMAN' HOCKING.

WORDS BY **CORIN SHEARSTON** PHOTO BY **KANE HIBBERD.**

From the industrial expanse of early '90s Newcastle, The Screaming Jets first arrived on the national music scene with their landmark 1991 album, *All For One*. Loaded with radio-friendly hard rock hits, such as 'Better', 'C'mon', and 'Shine On', the LP would catapult the quartet into the annals of Aussie rock. The 'Jets reputation as purveyors of quality hard rock was solidified between 1991 and 2001 through frequent touring and notable gigs, supporting the likes of KISS, Alice Cooper, Def Leppard, and Ugly Kid Joe. In live settings, The Screaming Jets are renowned for passionate performances which showcase the ballsy, soaring voice of their sole original remaining member, frontman Dave Gleeson, the twin guitar attack of Jimi 'The Human' Hocking and Scotty Kingman, and the locomotive-like rhythms of drummer Cam McGlinchey.

Their latest album is being praised as another quintessential Jets release, exhibiting the addictive hooks and uplifting melodies that they're known for. Marking a sad chapter in the evolving legacy of the group, their original bassist, friend and frequent songsmith Paul Woseen, passed away on September 15 this year, leaving the remaining Jets in negotiations about how to proceed with a few short-term replacement bassists. A pivotal force in the success of the group, Woseen wrote notable tracks such as 'Shine On' and 'Helping Hand', and lent his deep and nimble bass lines to all of their ten LPs. Due to having a collective reputation categorised by determination, tenacity and drive, the Jets are back on the road on November 3, in a national tour wrapping up on February 23, 2023, with more shows to be announced. Jimi 'The Human' Hocking joined us to reflect on the Jets' lengthy history, and the making of Professional Misconduct.

Do The Screaming Jets still reside in Newcastle?

It's been years since the band resided there. Everybody originally came from Newcastle, until the third year when the original guitar player Richie [Richard Lara] left, and I came in to replace him [in 1993]. I'm a Melbourne boy. I was living in Sydney doing other gigs, and I ended up coming to the 'Jets for three weeks...which is now 30 years ago.

My condolences on the death of Paul Woseen.

Yeah, it's been a tough week for everybody. We were all frozen with the news; we had just finished a tour. Paul had been the main songwriter of the band for the most part for all these years. Even though it's gonna be a hard thing to do, it feels like the right thing to do, to go out and play the songs that he created and let them see the light of day. We [have found some fill-in players], but won't be looking for a permanent bass player anytime soon, until we collect our thoughts and see how we're going to navigate this.

At least you have songs from a new album to go out and share with people.

That's the good part. I mean this album got started in lockdown, when Scotty started coming up with some guitar riffs because he was bored. Even though Paul has always been the main songwriter, he wasn't doing a lot of songwriting at the time, so that worked out great, because he brought lyrics and melody ideas [to combine] with Scotty's riffs. It really got the momentum going. Right up until January of this year, [when we got back into the studio], we were piecing the songs together remotely. We thought we might have to go and re-record them. As it turns out, we got a lot of good stuff, but some of the songs weren't complete with lyrics. In the last couple of days, we were literally in the studio looking at a track that didn't have a single lyric, thinking maybe we weren't going to make it. Then a day or two later, Dave [Gleeson, vocals], Paul [Woseen] and our great producer, Steve James [The Sex Pistols, Monty Python], had been diligently working on some lyric and melody ideas and we had another song finished. We also]re-recorded our first album, [1991's All For One], and we did an EP called *Bitter Pill*, which we released online, so we had a clue that we could finish a new album. How far down the road we would get was the question.

So, with the riff-writing for this record, I imagine it came from you guys sitting around in your own houses and playing in isolation before you all came together?

That's certainly the genesis of it. The riffs were the foundations of the songs, but they were pretty raw. I'd receive verse and chorus ideas from Scotty, Pauly would put a bass line to them, and that would be the start. We did a lot of cutting and pasting to get possible structures together, and Dave would sing over them from where he was. When we started the sessions, a lot of things survived from the original bits and pieces [in lockdown]. Some of the solos were done on the '60s Vox Satellite, a small-caliber app that I have in my office, which I mic'd up. It's kind of cute.

What are the main guitars that you're rocking these days?

Well, Scott's a bit of a one-guitar guy, he's had his Gold Top classic for quite some time as his go-to, whereas I have more guitars than sense. My go-to guitar for most of the record was an old favourite that I've had for a long time. I used to have a band called Jimi The Human & Spectre 7. We had a Top 20 album. I always played this old Gold Top from 1969, which I've had since the '80s. I used that for nearly 70% of the solos on Professional Misconduct, with a replica '54 Fold Top made by Reuben's Guitars in Cairns. I also used a white Stratocaster, and a Telecaster.

I read somewhere that you were also involved with The Angels for a time?

Yeah, I'm the oldest one in The Screaming Jets, so back in the '80s I went on a tour playing guitar with The Angels on their Live Line tour, which has become one of their famous live albums now. I got 24 hours notice to come in and play in the band because [former rhythm guitarist] Bob Spencer had a collision onstage with [lead singer] Doc Neeson. The tour was going to be cancelled two gigs in, but it was the biggest tour I ever undertook. It was a huge set: there were theatre shows and concert shows. The plan was that I would come in and save the day originally, doing one show. I was only 24. Because the show went so well [lead guitarist] Rick Brewster looked at me and said "maybe we don't cancel this tour, maybe we get this kid to do it". So I ended up being the youngest member in The Angels' history at that time, doing a couple of months on the road with the band before Bob came back. We remain friends to this day, so the connection between The 'Jets and The Angels is quite a long-standing connection.

And you're both named after things that fly...

I hadn't thought of that! ag

The Screaming Jets' *Professional Misconduct* is out now.

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A RECOMMENDED DOSAGE

HAVING LAUNCHED THEIR SIXTH LP, *FRONZOLI*, IN NOVEMBER, **PSYCHEDELIC PORN CRUMPETS** ARE NOW BACK IN STOCK AT YOUR FAVOURITE IMAGINARY BAKERY. AUSTRALIAN GUITAR SUNK THEIR TEETH IN.

WORDS BY **CORIN SHEARSTON**. PHOTO BY **MURRAY CURNOW**.

Ever since they began making their earliest vibrations in 'an old horse barn' in Leederville WA, Psychedelic Porn Crumpets have emerged as a key group in Australia's modern psych-rock renaissance. Before taking their place as the newest addition to an arguable 'Big 4' of effects-laden groups - Tame Impala, King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard and Pond - most of their current line up was amalgamated by UK-expat Jack McEwen in 2014, who emigrated to Australia with his family at the age of 13. Settling in Perth, birthplace of Tame Impala and Pond, who were hugely influential on the young musician, Psychedelic Porn Crumpets were born through McEwen's need to create a new project to brand for a graphic design course at his uni. During the nine years that followed, the group released five full length albums, one EP, and an exclusive digital release called *The USB-Sides* - its format being evident in its name. In late 2020, the group performed two songs for triple J's *Like A Version* series, which included a surprising reinvention of 'I Wanna Be Like You', from Disney's The Jungle Book.

Backing their experimental endeavours with a strong DIY ethos, the group have become an endearing cult act. In 2021, their fourth album *Shyga! The Sunlight Mound* peaked at Number 4 on the ARIA charts. After setting sail on a cruise ship tour from Florida in October 2023, organised by Coheed & Cambria and featuring eleven other bands, Psychedelic Porn Crumpets became a support act for heavy UK alt-rockers Royal Blood on their national December tour. Reflecting on the fans that his group attracts, McEwen states, "it's nice to know that [we're] reaching broader eccentricities of people". He spoke to Australian Guitar about his mission to achieve mind-altering musical progress.

What do you most enjoy about playing in such an effects-heavy band?

The genre can go anywhere and do anything. If you're sticking to just one genre, that sets limitations. As an effects-heavy band, it seems like you can change direction pretty easily.

Around the time the band formed in 2014, what was the unit you were studying at uni that required you to re-engage in the performing arts?

I was studying graphic design. It was one of those entry level courses that required me to brand something. I chose to brand a band. I think at the time, I was massively into Tame Impala and Pond, so seeing that they were Perth-based, I thought I'd do something [in their style]. Pond had named one of their albums *Psychedelic Mango*, so I kind of ripped that off. Then our lecturer asked if we could add some music to the project, so I thought I'd give it a crack, as I had been doing some recording in different bands. We're still the same bedroom project, but hopefully the music has gotten a bit better.

In the early days of the group, was it hard to decide on a recognisable sound, with so much room for experimentation?

I suppose there was never a plan for anything. It [was just based on] whatever was coming out of my dome, that I chucked into the speakers [while seeing what ideas] sounded more cohesive or fit together better on a record. I also just practiced bad recording techniques before we started understanding our way around Ableton a bit better, and how songs could be written in the direction we were trying to go in.

Was Fronzoli another DIY effort from you guys?

This one was more DIY than the last one. We had a silent label that was helping us out with funding for the last three records, but it got too comfy. I think comfortability is the death of creativity. We wanted to go back to self-releasing [for *Fronzoli*], thinking that if this record did well, or if we made enough money to produce another one, then it'd be completely on our own backs. That gave me more determination to want to produce better music and make it sound good, while making everything sound clean before getting everything pumping live. I think that was always the goal for *Fronzoli* - to be an encompassment of the last records, but an introductory record too. If you like it, you've got a back catalogue to find.

How did you guys record Fronzoli?

I did all the guitars, bass, vocals and everything else, before making the drums on the [Mikro Mk2] drum machine. Danny [Caddy] will then go into a studio and re-do the drums. Then maybe we'll add some sound effects, or re-record certain guitar tones. The body of work takes place [in the one studio], but we'll dismantle things and go 'why don't we record it this way?'

When you're creating songs, how do strike a balance between melodies and psychedelic effects?

That's the hard part. I'll write as much music as possible with the instrumental brain, and then I'll come back in from a songwriter's perspective. The winning concept seems to be picking up a guitar and having a vocal melody from the get-go, but with so many riffs and weird parts, it's hard. I don't want songs to sound forced, I want them to sound like they're naturally heading in a certain direction, rather than the chorus being some big thing. I think *Fronzoli* has that. A lot of it came from acoustic songs that I laid electric stuff over the top of.

How large is your pedalboard at the moment?

It's pretty bare. I'm mainly using an Orange Kongpressor [compressor pedal], an old [Electro Harmonix] POG [octave generator], a Swollen Pickle [fuzz pedal], an [MXR] Phase 90, and a [BOSS] Tera Echo, but I did have a bunch of pedals. My main pedal is the [Aclam] Dr. Robert [a multipurpose pedal which replicates the VOX UL730 amp, used by The Beatles during some of their Revolver and Sgt. Peppers sessions]. That's my bread and butter. I'll basically have a Hot Rod or an AC30 for my clean tone, then with the Dr. Robert emulating a VOX, when I put that through another VOX it's got more dirt and grit. It's got a sick overdrive.

What guitars are you mainly playing on stage right now?

My old Fender Jazzmaster has been my go to since day dot really. I'll be so sad on the day it dies, but I'm hoping that I've got it forever. I haven't dived too far into the world of guitars yet. I was talking with Toisin Abasi from Animals As Leaders recently, as we did a cruise ship tour with them, and I was wondering how he could even play an eight string guitar. That is the next level. I almost felt like a stonemason from 40,000 years ago, who had just been shown a modern cathedral. I suppose I've got a more distinct flavour [in my] recording now, so I might try to get my guitar souped up for what makes sense for the sound. We made the first album [2016's *High Visceral (Part One)*] in the way that a lot of other bands have made their first albums, where we used whatever we could get. We were singing though SingStar microphones while using broken equipment. It was all we could afford. With the more you get to know gear, you can almost start to have too much choice. It's a curse.

Psychedelic Porn Crumpets' *Fronzoli* is out now.

EVOKING A DISTANT DECADE

BORN FROM A LOVE OF RETRO '60S ROCK AND PSYCHEDELIA, **LARGE MIRAGE**'S DEBUT EP *A SIDE TO BLAME* CEMENTS THEM AS AN IDIOSYNCRATIC FORCE IN THE SYDNEY MUSIC SCENE. AUSTRALIAN GUITAR EXAMINES THE CREATION OF THE BAND AND THEIR RECENT RELEASE.

WORDS BY **CORIN SHEARSTON** PHOTO BY **LUCIA BRAHAM.**

For a trio of 20-somethings who formed 50 years after the end of the '60s, the vintage sound and aesthetic of Large Mirage is remarkably reminiscent of this long-gone era in rock. Emerging from the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury regions before settling in Sydney, the group consists of lead guitarist-vocalist-chief songwriter Kolya Chan, renowned for his soaring, rapid-fire solos, along with agile bassist-vocalist Blake Rochester, and their powerful drummer Daniel Croft.

Large Mirage first unveiled their strong retro sound in late 2020 in the Super 8 music video for their debut single, 'Going Insane', filmed in the middle of a large paddock in Katoomba. For the shoot, Large Mirage had to take two amp stacks and a drum kit across the grassy, marshy ground - an early sign of commitment to their craft, which has been expanding through three recent gigs abroad and the launch of their debut EP, *A Side To Blame*. Before flying overseas, Chan and Rochester took the necks off their Fender guitars to pack their axes in suitcases.

Back in NSW after four weeks in Europe, Large Mirage has been working with rock singer Malia Hoffman. A blend of the group's '60s influences are evident on their EP, veering from the slow menace of 'Ain't Gonna Die Today' to the upbeat rock 'n' roll rhythms of 'Evelyn'. Large Mirage recorded all five tracks independently at DeadWater Studios in the Hawkesbury, before the mixes were finished by Blackheath resident Sam Troy and mastered by Sydney producer Owen Penglis (Violent Soho, Royal Headache, Straight Arrows). Chan joined us from his Ashfield share house to discuss his band's love for retro rock and the making of their EP, while sharing insights gathered from studying guitar playing.

Someone could mistake Large Mirage for something from 1967. How did your fixation with retro rock begin?

Well, I was brought up with music from the '60s, as my dad grew up in the '60s. I always enjoyed bands like The Beatles, The Who, and Led Zeppelin. There was so much going on, so much progress. It has become a massive fascination for me. That translates into my own songwriting and style of playing, which is what Large Mirage is largely about. You should always try to create something unique, but some of the best genres of music exist already. This [can leave people] who just want to expand on that, or make new songs in those styles.

How was the process of trying to find likeminded band members?

I had spent a lot of time trying to find people who related to my vision of playing '60s style music. I had started writing songs and I played with lots of people. I got to know Blake as a bass player, who had a band called The Moonshakes while he was living in the Hawkesbury region and I was living near Katoomba. They sounded like Santana, specifically from his late '60s to early '70s era. Blake was the guitarist for this band, but he liked the idea of having a big band, like Santana, so he got in contact with me. When I joined that band, it was the first time that I was hanging around people who were savvy to the music that I knew. Blake knew the concept of the sound of that time. I asked him if he wanted to play bass in a new project, and we started working on some of my songs together, away from The Moonshakes. We went through a couple of drummers but eventually we came across Daniel, who grew up on Led Zeppelin. Large Mirage started from there. We came together and jammed, and that worked, but over time it really became a thing. We've now been working with a new singer called Malia Hoffman, and we're trying out three-part harmonies.

How did you record *A Side To Blame*?

We did it ourselves. Blake was the recording engineer and I was the producer. We also have a friend, Jackson Sharp, who is starting a new studio called DeadWater Studios in the Hawkesbury region. It's in the middle of nowhere, and you can make a lot of noise there. We recorded all the instruments live in his little studio in one weekend, across two days. We played live in the same room together, with a click track, before doing overdubs.

What guitar did you use for the recording of the EP?

I used my Gibson SG. It's an SG Special from around 1969. It's got P90 pickups, so that separates it from the standard SG model that was going around at the time, which players like Angus Young were using. For the amp, I used a Marshall JMP from around 1971, which is a 100 watt Super Lead.

There's some scorching lead work on the EP. What have you focused on developing in your soloing over the years?

I'm a student of bluesy soloing. I'm not the greatest guitarist in the world because I don't really know much theory, and the greatest guitar players are jazz players. I've definitely improved a lot. When I composed the solos for this EP, the search for melody was a priority, so that listeners could follow while they told some kind of story. Every phrase had to have meaning so that they didn't sound nonsensical.

Are you a self-taught guitarist and singer?

I'm self taught as a guitar player. My dad plays guitar, and he would tell me listen to rock music, so he taught me how to teach myself, really. I started by learning simple bluesy solos by ear. I only really became a proficient lead guitar player when I started trying to think about music in my daily life, and the notes that people were playing. My feel came along through improvisation, while trying to emulate sounds. As for singing, I have taken singing lessons, and although I don't have great technique, I got better by practicing on songs that I found challenging but enjoyable.

Considering that you're mainly self-taught, what's your opinion on beginner guitarists trying to learn techniques from YouTube?

I'm don't advocate for the internet or social media, but if you want to dedicate a certain part of your life to learning a skill then YouTube is such a tool for you. There's a seemingly infinite amount of expertise out there. I think the only difficult part of learning on YouTube is not knowing who to trust, and getting conflicting information, but you don't need to concern yourself with learning every technique perfectly. You just need to have an idea of what you want to play. If you're enjoying playing what someone else has played before, then you're learning. It's not hard to teach yourself in that way. All the resources are available to you, on your phone, or whatever. That being said, if you have a teacher and you're learning a lot from them, then I don't think there's any better way to learn. If you're understanding things in your own way, and coming up with methods of understanding the notes that you're playing, then that's your own expression.

What do Large Mirage have on the horizon?

We have an exciting new concept and a new single coming out. It still sounds like Large Mirage, but it's now also heading in a slightly different direction. I'm keen to realise what that is.

Large Mirage's *A Side To Blame* EP is out now.

MICHELLE PITIRIS @SHEISAPRODITE

HEAVENLY THUNDER

AFTER STEADILY RISING AS A FIERCE CULT SENSATION FROM CANBERRA, **TEEN JESUS AND THE JEAN TEASERS** HAVE HONOURED THE EMOTIONAL INTENSITY OF THEIR LIVE SHOWS WITH THEIR 13-TRACK DEBUT ALBUM, *I LOVE YOU*. AUSTRALIAN GUITAR INVESTIGATED ITS FORMATION.

WORDS BY **CORIN SHEARSTON**. PHOTO BY **MICHELLE PITIRIS.**

Building their career from humble schoolyard beginnings to being picked as support act for the Foo Fighters, punky rock quartet Teen Jesus And The Jean Teasers released their debut album, *I Love You*, on October 6. The group's lineup consists of vocalist Anna Ryan, drummer Neve Van Boxsel, bassist Jaida Stephenson, and guitarist Scarlett McKahey, who all met at age 15 in suburban Canberra. In a process far removed from the prolificness of their earlier singles and their debut 2022 EP, *Pretty Good For A Girl Band*, the album was slow-cooked with Holy Holy's Oscar Dawson in his beachside studio on the Mornington Peninsula.

The group displays a new level of maturity on the record. One of its four new singles, Van Boxsel's harrowing and acoustic 'Never Saw It Coming', addresses traumatic experience. Ryan's 'Salt' was originally written as a breakup song before becoming the group's first track to feature other artists - Melbourne trio The Grogans.

Since 2016, the group have shared stages with the likes of Spiderbait and Skegss, while clocking up five tours. Their debut stadium appearance with the Foo Fighters on December 4 is now marked with a tinge of sadness, as it will be McKahey's final live gig with the group. In August, McKahey announced that her live role will cease before the end of 2023, after choosing to focus on her health (McKahey has Postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome). Pursuing new roles in the music industry while continuing to contribute to the songwriting and recording endeavours of her group, McKahey has been managing her younger brother's punk band Sonic Reducer, while also working for TBC Management. She joined Australian Guitar to reflect on the surprising story of Teen Jesus And The Jean Teasers.

It's pretty amazing that your live chapter with the band is ending with a gig supporting the Foo Fighters. How did they hear about your band?

I actually have no idea! I might be wrong, but I think someone in their team gives them a list of options, they listen to them, and decide who they want. It's very exciting. I'm so keen. This will be our first stadium show and we're pretty surprised to have gotten the opportunity. They seem like lovely people. The immense fame hasn't changed their musical attitude. Apparently Dave Grohl comes into the green rooms at shows with tequila for everyone like "hey, I'm Dave".

Looking back to your early years, I hear you got your start in music as a cello player before Teen Jesus formed in 2015. After learning cello, why did learning guitar appeal to you?

Honestly, it's kind of embarrassing, but I think I needed to be on an instrument where I could solo. I feel like I was a bit of a show off. I went through a massive grunge phase in year eight, and became absolutely infatuated with Nirvana, Hole, Veruca Salt, L7, and then Arctic Monkeys and The Strokes. Because those bands are so guitar-heavy, with the guitars holding the focal point even more than the vocals sometimes, I insisted on playing guitar. Also, Neve [Van Boxsel] was already an amazing drummer, I didn't want to play bass because it was too similar to cello, and I'm not that good at singing. So playing guitar was the only role left for me.

I read about the band's debut show at a school fair. What memories from that gig have stuck in your mind?

It was so scary. It's all a blur because I was so full of adrenaline, and terrified. We played three covers and two originals, 'Smells Like Teen Spirit', 'Techno Fan' by The Wombats and 'Big Jet Plane' by Angus & Julia Stone. I had so much fun. That definitely was where the addiction started. After we all did that, we thought, "well we can't stop now". That's what it has always been about really. Fun. It was something that we could all do together after school, and on weekends. Other people weren't part of it, [so it] was like this special little club. I think that's always been the case for us, really, the fact that we can hang out and drink for free. We started the band when we were around 14, 15. I've known them all since I was around seven, so we're more like siblings than anything else these days.

I read that after watching your debut show, your dad decided to buy you a red Gibson SG, as he saw a lot of potential in your band?

Yeah, exactly. That was great. I was too scared to put my SG on a plane [for the recording of *I Love You*] because it's so old. I borrowed an SG belonging to Gus [Angus Vasic] from The Grogans, though, so it was there with me in spirit. I'm not risking [taking my SG on the plane] anymore. I don't trust airlines with my most prized possession.

For the recording of *I Love You*, how did Oscar Dawson help you get the guitar tone?

I think a lot of it was DI'd actually [with a guitar plugged directly into the recording console], which is new for me. Normally I record with amps, but the tones were pretty consistent throughout. I used this old Tube Screamer pedal on every song, because I play it in every song live. Oscar really understood what I wanted, but we didn't waste too much time on it.

I'm intrigued by the lyrics to one of the new songs, 'Toe Bone', which are - "I would love to have another toe bone, next to the others but just like a thumb". How did that come together?

One day when we were recording, we were waiting around while everyone else got their parts down. Anna was doing vocals, while Jada and I were lying down in the backyard. I started playing this game called I Would Love, where we'd go back and forth saying what we'd love to have. For example, I would say, "I would love a big bowl of watermelon", she'd say, "I would love a Bloody Mary". When I wrote 'Toe Bone' with [folk singer] Adam Newling, we decided to base the lyrics on that game, after I told him about it. I messaged Jaida to tell her we were doing it, asking for something else to quickly put in the song. She texted back that she would love an extra toe on each foot that she could use like a thumb. It's so stupid, we probably shouldn't have put that in the song but that's OK. It's comedic relief, maybe.

How different was the recording of *I Love You* to the recording of your previous release, the *Pretty Good For A Girl Band* EP?

It was completely different. Normally we'll just record singles. The EP was recorded really separately because of COVID. It was very disjointed, so it was a really important exercise for us to do it with Oscar, at his house. Having to chill and not rush was good. We kept worrying about things like [the] budget and time when that's really not that important in the grand scheme of things. All the songs were written years ago, or on little songwriting trips, [with] just the four of us in little rural towns and Airbnbs, so it was bound to be a different approach, [as] we [had] never done that stuff before. It was very collaborative and slow moving, in a nice way. I'm so happy we went with Oscar. We love him so much.

Teen Jesus and the Jean Teasers' *I Love You* is out now.

LIGHT YEARS AHEAD

WHY JIMI HENDRIX IS STILL INSPIRING THE LATEST GENERATION OF GUITARISTS – 53 YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH

STORY BY JIM BEAUGEZ PHOTO BY CYRUS ANDREWS

[left] Jimi Hendrix relaxes, sort of, in London in 1966

CYRUS ANDREWS/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

"THE ONLY THING WE ASKED EACH OTHER AT THE VERY BEGINNING WAS, 'DO YOU HAVE ANY COOL NWOBHM RIFFS?'"

"IT SEEMED LIKE HE WAS THE ROOT THAT SO MANY GUITAR PLAYERS FROM HIS GENERATION — ALL THE WAY UP TO MY GENERATION — CITED AS THIS MONUMENTAL, GAME-CHANGING ARTIST"
— AYLA TESLER-MABÉ

LORNE THOMSON

THE STAGE WAS DARK

when Melanie Faye began her solo performance at the closing session of Summit LA18, an invitation-only gathering of ideas and innovators held in downtown Los Angeles in November 2018. The lights slowly rose as she picked jazzy notes from a surf-green D'Angelico semi-hollow guitar, and by the time she segued into a rendition of "Little Wing," they had revealed a stage nearly empty except for Faye.

A fresh face in the guitar pantheon, Faye had only become "internet famous" the previous year when a simple smartphone video shot as she sat on a floor playing a Stratocaster went viral. But her dexterous fretboard skills, and the influence of Jimi Hendrix upon them, were undeniable. She didn't shy away from acknowledging her hero, either — a poster of him hung on the wall behind her, as if to announce her arrival to his lineage.

Five years later, the now 25-year-old Nashville guitarist's intoxicating, inventive mashup of the Jimi Hendrix classic with an instrumental variation on pop singer Mariah Carey's Number 1 hit "My All" has garnered millions of views on YouTube and inspired a transcription video that has clocked tens of thousands of its own.

That Faye's reading of "Little Wing" was based on a version played by Eric Gales — who was hailed as the second coming of Hendrix when he first entered the national scene in the Nineties — reveals the connection generations of artists, and guitarists in particular, have to the music Hendrix created. There can never be another Hendrix, but the cosmic dust he left behind still informs and inspires the galaxy of music being created today.

"If you're gonna do Hendrix at this point, like 50-something years later, you'd better put some type of unique interpretation on it, an unexpected twist, because we've heard it a million times," Faye says. "It's not enough to just hold a candle to his cover. You also have to put your own spin on it."

JAMES **Marshall Hendrix was born** in Seattle, Washington, on November 27, 1942, and died at age 27 in a London flat, half a world away, on September 18, 1970. Of the intervening years, his most prolific were his most visible, riding a wave of fame as the prince of psychedelic rock in the late 1960s. He broke all the rules of pop music culture with outlandish, ear-splitting performances full of guitar acrobatics, wailing feedback and his casual charm, arriving at a time when American and British musicians weaned on blues and early rock 'n' roll were beginning to experiment with the boundaries of pop music.

The year the Jimi Hendrix Experience released their debut album, *Are You Experienced* — 1967 — also saw the debuts of influential bands like the Doors, Grateful Dead, Pink Floyd, the Velvet Underground and Big Brother and the Holding Company; not to mention pivotal works by established artists, including the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Jefferson Airplane's *Surrealistic Pillow* and the Who's *The Who Sell Out*. That June, before American audiences had even heard his record, Hendrix performed an incendiary set at the Monterey Pop Festival in central California, opening with a furious rendition of Howlin' Wolf's "Killing Floor" and ending with his slinky take on "Wild Thing," climaxed by setting his Stratocaster on fire and smashing it to pieces.

"I slowly made my way into [*Jimi Hendrix's*] musical universe and began discovering for myself his impact and what he meant," Ayla Tesler-Mabé says

And then there were Hendrix's own songs, led by his visionary guitar playing and lyricism and rooted in rhythm and blues. "The Wind Cries Mary," which showcased his signature double-stops and preference for fretting chord tones on the low E string with his thumb instead of barring across all six strings; the 12-bar blues of "Red House"; the pentatonic box workout of "Manic Depression"; and "Purple Haze," a monstrous, career-making groove built around an E7♯9 chord, which he used often enough for it to become known as the "Hendrix chord."

While he had to go to England to find fame on his own, his guitar style was cemented playing clubs primarily across the American South, where he helped evolve R&B and soul into funk. During his years on the chitlin' circuit — a loose network of clubs and juke joints that catered to Black artists and audiences — through the early and mid Sixties with Little Richard, the Isley Brothers and others, he honed an unshakable sense of rhythm and mastered the pentatonic and blues scales that were the foundation of his playing.

"In my eyes, his rhythm work doesn't really get talked about a lot," says Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, who spent his teenage years playing blues festivals and the remaining juke joints around the American South. "It was a big thing for me,

EXTRA JIMI'S

Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, Mateus Asato, Towa Bird and others choose their favorite Hendrix moments

Compiled by Jim Beaugez

ALLY VENABLE

My favorite Hendrix moment or song would have to be "Castles Made of Sand." Jimi's writing is remarkable, and I just love the way he bases this song with the chords he plays. I was fortunate enough to get to play this song in Austin at the Jimi Hendrix Experience 80th birthday show last year. It was a surreal moment for me. It is also one of his most difficult songs to play and sing at the same time, so it was really fun because it challenged me.

and a lot of people don't know that he played on the chitlin' circuit and he came from the R&B world. He was definitely steeped in rhythm guitar playing."

On the 1965 Isley Brothers song "Move Over and Let Me Dance," for example, the guitar work is fully formed Hendrix — the lines between rhythm and lead guitar are blurred as he frets rubbery pentatonic lines between chords, which is to say most of the time. He even throws in a variation on a 7♯9 chord.

Rhythm and blues is also where neo-soul artist Faye relates most to Hendrix. While she certainly has the chops to pull off Hendrix's more fiery work, she deliberately tones down her shredder side when working with other artists, opting to lean into the cleaner tones and textures in Hendrix's playing and his R&B roots.

"R&B is relevant to my generation," she says, "and if I emphasize that influence, I'll be able to work with more modern artists." Her strategy is definitely working, as she performs and collaborates with pop artists like Mac DeMarco, and with rapper Russ on "Fatima" from his 2023 album, *Santiago*. "It's a very distinct guitar riff, but I also did the bass, and then I wrote the melody for the hook and co-produced the drums. That song is channeling an R&B, hip-hop-adjacent sort of vibe."

A deeper listen reveals another layer to the song, though, as Faye explains. "I'm hitting the Hendrix chord over and over again, but it's removed from context. I'm doing it like a jazz embellishment in a contemporary R&B, hip-hop-adjacent modern context, not in a psychedelic rock context, not just because I want it to be relevant to my generation, but also because I wanted to alter the perception of the guitar. I didn't want people to look at the guitar and think, 'more *cliché* rock and blues licks we've already heard.' I wanted to put a fresh, modern R&B spin on it."

For Seattle rock guitarist Ayron Jones, Hendrix's chord inversions have inspired songs like "Take Your Time" from his 2021 album, *Child of the State*, and "Blood in the Water" from his 2023 release, *Chronicles of the Kid*. "On 'Take Your Time,' I'm using an inverted E6, which is basically taking the bass out of the

E6 chord and inverting it to a third and holding down the rest of the chord, so the bass is actually the harmony," he says. "And then I'm just kind of walking in it, almost like a C♯ minor — but it's over a major."

Brazilian virtuoso Mateus Asato, a shredder who started out worshiping players like Steve Vai, Steve Morse and Joe Satriani, found his way to Hendrix working backward through John Mayer and Stevie Ray Vaughan. "It was just me playing distorted and trying to be as fast as possible," he says. "I just wanted to play the scales and try to be clean with my arpeggios, all that stuff. But then I realized maybe that wasn't my path."

Taking inspiration from Hendrix's funkier, more soulful side for his work with Silk Sonic, the supergroup created by Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak, Asato's playing is heavily indebted to the Seventies funk, soul and R&B that Hendrix inspired.

"When it comes to just the rhythm guitar playing, Bruno was very specific, like, 'Man, you've got to add those little nuances in between chords so it just makes everything prettier,'" Asato says. "Just the brightness of those little nuances, the technique of Jimi — I don't even know how to describe what that is. You play a chord, and I mean, we know it's the pull-off, the hammer-on, the double-stop, whatever. But again, there's no term — it's just Jimi."

WHILE **creating a new chord vocabulary** with his 7♯9 and proclivity for the C major shape are key to Hendrix's continued influence on new generations of guitarists, his other technical and

DAVID REDFERNS/REDFERNS (HENDRIX) TIM MOSENFELDER (FAYE) GREG SOVER FACEBOOK (SOVER)

> "IF YOU'RE GONNA DO HENDRIX AT THIS POINT, YOU'D BETTER PUT SOME TYPE OF UNIQUE INTERPRETATION ON IT, AN UNEXPECTED TWIST, BECAUSE WE'VE HEARD IT A MILLION TIMES"
> — MELANIE FAYE

[from left] Hendrix at the Albert Hall in February 1969, Nashville's Melanie Faye and Philadelphia's Greg Sover

AYLA TESLER-MABÉ

One thing that makes his playing so fiery, expressive, amazing and soulful is the way he bends with vibrato. I feel like there are a lot of players who will bend, and then they release the bend and then they apply vibrato – but he bends with vibrato, and it just has more of a "human voice" quality to it. I think of his solo on "Fire" at Woodstock; that's one of my favorite solos of his, ever. In certain moments it doesn't sound like a guitar at all.

CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM

I love "Voodoo Child." Not the "Slight Return" version, but the slower, "Catfish Blues"-sounding one. I just love the story – you know, "the moon turned fire red" – I love that mystique. That's actually one of my favorite joints by him. I also love "May This Be Love" because it showcases his R&B chops.

GREG SOVER

On the first VHS I ever had of Jimi Hendrix, there was "Purple Haze," "Voodoo Chile (Slight Return)," "Little Wing" and "The Wind Cries Mary." I forget the gig, or it might've been a bunch of gigs in one, but they were played at the house all the time. I was very young, and this was me just pretending I knew how to play them on the guitar when I didn't even know chords yet. I was about 14 when I learned "Purple Haze," and it's been "Purple Haze" ever since. Every time I hear that song, it reminds me of that.

MARCUS VMACHADO

"Machine Gun" from Band of Gypsys. That solo is like no other. It's probably in the top three best solos ever by Jimi, because what he was doing on the guitar in that particular moment was crazy. I tell people, if you've never heard of Jimi, definitely go to that moment and listen to what he's playing – it sounds like a machine gun, literally. I want to take a nap after listening to that because it's just so emotional. As far as songs go, one of my favorites is "Hey Baby (New Rising Sun)." It's mixing classical music, R&B and soul. And, of course, "1983 … (A Merman I Should Turn to Be)." That's another incredible sci-fi song.

MATEUS ASATO

Hendrix playing the National Anthem, breaking the rules – I think that was savage. To me, that's what makes a revolution. I'm not trying to be political or whatever; it's just like, music has no boundaries. Now [that] I'm opening my mind about it, [also] him freaking burning the guitars and just going crazy and kicking the cabinets and stuff. But yeah, nowadays everybody plays the National Anthem on the guitar, but those are things that I add to the list of why he was really a guitar revolutionary.

MELANIE FAYE

I love all of his pretty songs, like "Little Wing," "Angel," "Bold As Love" and "May This Be Love." I have very fond and nostalgic memories of listening to "Drifting" on my very first smartphone in the ninth grade.

NICK LEE

The first riff that really grabbed me was the main riff in "I Don't Live Today." It was just so much heavier than anything I'd heard from that era thus far as a youngling. The groove of the drums versus the guitar is just heavy as hell, then you add the grimness of the lyrics. It's all heavy, [and it] hit me very hard as a kid. If you want to talk about a particular "moment," then I have to go with [him] ripping a solo with his teeth, just because it doesn't get much more badass than that. I haven't seen anyone do it since.

TOWA BIRD

I love "Fire." That's one of my favorite songs ever. "Little Wing" and "Voodoo Child" obviously have a place in my heart. And on the first record by the Experience, "Red House" is just so good as well. I don't know if I do have any favorites, but I guess if I had to summarize, it's probably "Fire" and then the others – with very minor degrees of separation. When you're an angsty teenager in your adolescence, nothing makes you happy. Nothing is ever good enough. But his music was really uplifting for me and made me feel so excited about the world.

Moon Tooth's Nick Lee [left] and Christone "Kingfish" Ingram

MOON TOOTH FACEBOOK (LEE) ERIKA GOLDRING/GETTY IMAGES (INGRAM)

stylistic innovations are also alive and well.

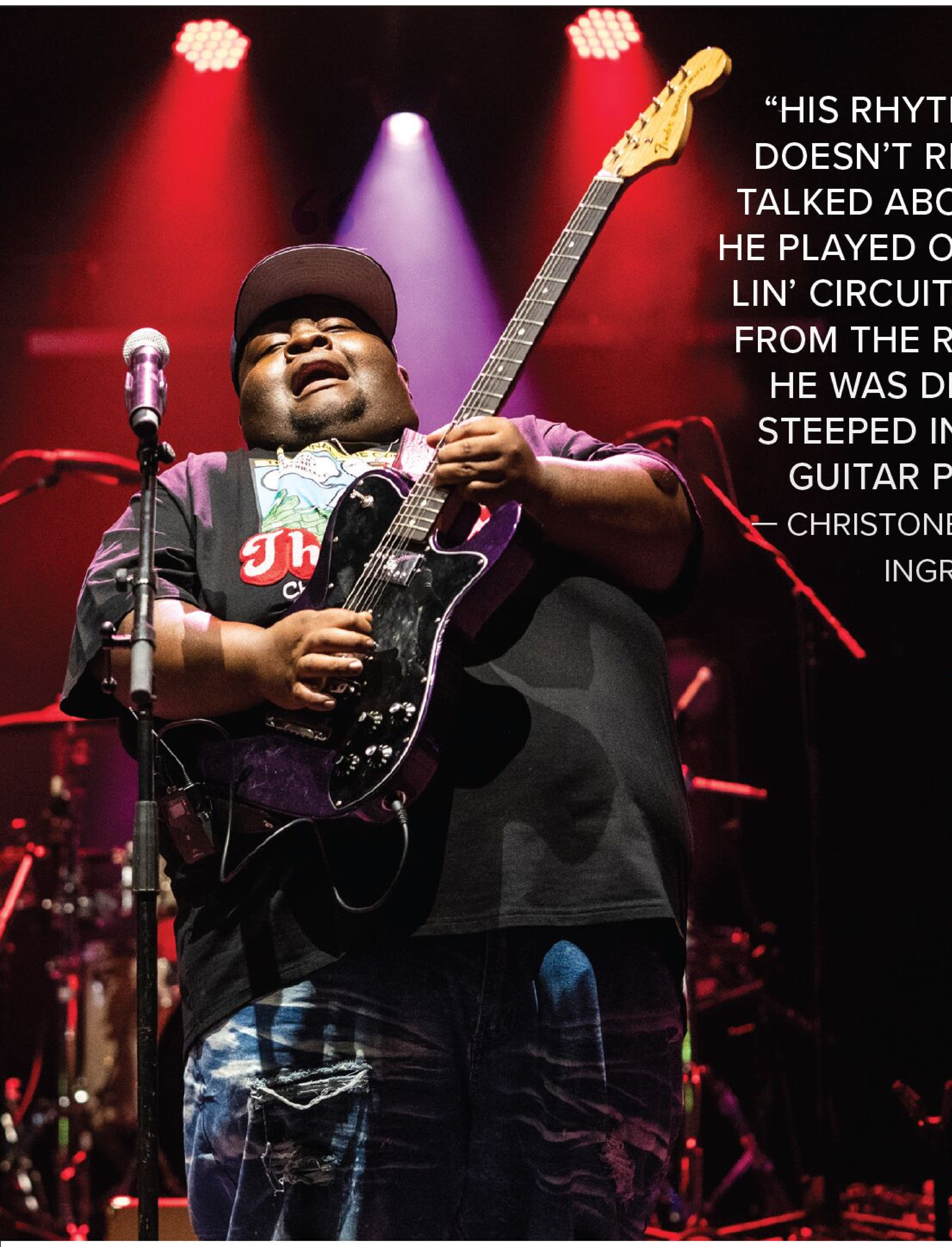
Twenty-two-year-old YouTuber Ayla Tesler-Mabé has amassed nearly 200,000 subscribers on the platform by posting videos of her playing songs like "Hey Joe," "Voodoo Child" and "May This Be Love." She has parlayed that success into deals with Fender and Ernie Ball Music Man and a collaboration with Willow Smith, and is now releasing her own soulful, guitar-driven pop singles on Spotify.

"When I started falling in love with guitar-driven music, I found that all roads led back to him," Tesler-Mabé says. "It seemed like he was the root that so many guitar players from his generation — all the way up to my generation — cited as this monumental, game-changing artist. That piqued my interest, and from there, I slowly made my way into his musical universe and began discovering for myself his impact and what he meant."

On her 2023 single "Haven't Seen Much of U Lately," Tesler-Mabé layers wah-drenched pentatonic runs over its melodic, funk-lite chorus, switching from major to minor and back as the root note changes, reminiscent of the licks Hendrix plays over the second half of "One Rainy Wish" from *Axis: Bold As Love*.

"You can really get so much mileage out of pentatonic," she says. "When you analyze Hendrix's rhythm playing, pretty much all of it is just [*the*] major pentatonic scale over major chords and then doing that for minor chords with the minor pentatonic scale. When I realized that, the fluidity opened in my playing."

Double-stops — or, more generally, a dyad, playing two notes at the same time — are often the grease that enables such fluidity between Hendrix's chords and notes, and he



"HIS RHYTHM WORK DOESN'T REALLY GET TALKED ABOUT A LOT... HE PLAYED ON THE CHITLIN' CIRCUIT AND CAME FROM THE R&B WORLD. HE WAS DEFINITELY STEEPED IN RHYTHM GUITAR PLAYING"
— CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM

used them in many different ways. He opened "Hey Joe" with a dyadic slide, for example, and the hammer-on variation he used throughout his work, but notably on songs like "The Wind Cries Mary" and "Little Wing," might be his most signature move of all.

"'Little Wing' is the perfect example of a song that was written a while ago but still makes sense today, and you're still finding out things about it, whether it's what he was singing about or the guitar playing," says Philadelphia-based blues guitarist Greg Sover. "The little embellishments and flourishes count so much, and if you ask me, they influenced a lot of music today, a lot of R&B, neo soul. There's still a lot of rock music that uses those double stops. And that was probably the biggest inspiration and lesson I've taken from the whole situation, from Jimi Hendrix, period."

Earlier this year, Sover took the stage at the Newtown Theater in Newtown, Pennsylvania, to play a two-hour tribute set of Hendrix tunes where he reached deep into his catalog, playing songs like "May This Be Love," "Up from the Skies" and the slow-burning, 15-minute "Voodoo Chile" alongside the better-known "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" and his other famous songs.

For his 2023 album, *His-Story*, Sover collaborated with Band of Gypsys bassist Billy Cox on covers of "Manic Depression" and "Remember," a chirpy deep cut from *Are You Experienced* that also showcases his double-stop technique.

"Jimi just took the guitar somewhere else. It made you really think, and it just actually makes you keep on thinking," Sover says. "He inspires you to keep looking a little further, because Jimi Hendrix is already done, so you don't want to do what he's done already. You want to leave that to the genius that he is already, but on your instrument itself, it makes you want to search more."

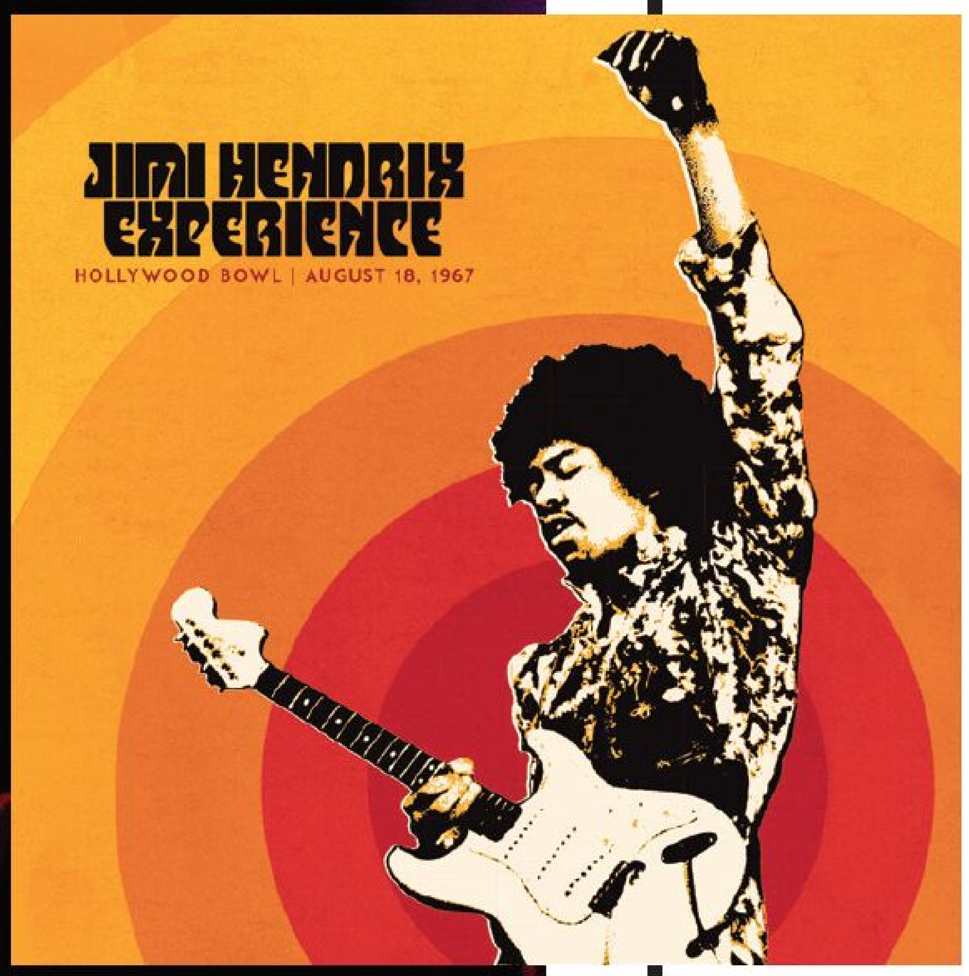
Asato, who studied Hendrix at Musicians Institute in Los Angeles — in a class actually devoted to Hendrix's guitar playing — credits Jimi's double-stops with inspiring him to look beyond the conventional separation of chords and licks and continuing exploring the instrument.

"[*In the class,*] we would grab a chord progression and then add those nuances in between the chords," Asato says. "That class specifically was game changing [*in terms of*] opening my horizons. The double-stops pretty much changed me; it was a mind-blowing thing. I was like, 'Okay, I need to drink that as much as I can.'

"He was just moving by the flow of his cre-

BOWLING FOR HOLLERS

The time a pre-fame Hendrix landed at the Hollywood Bowl

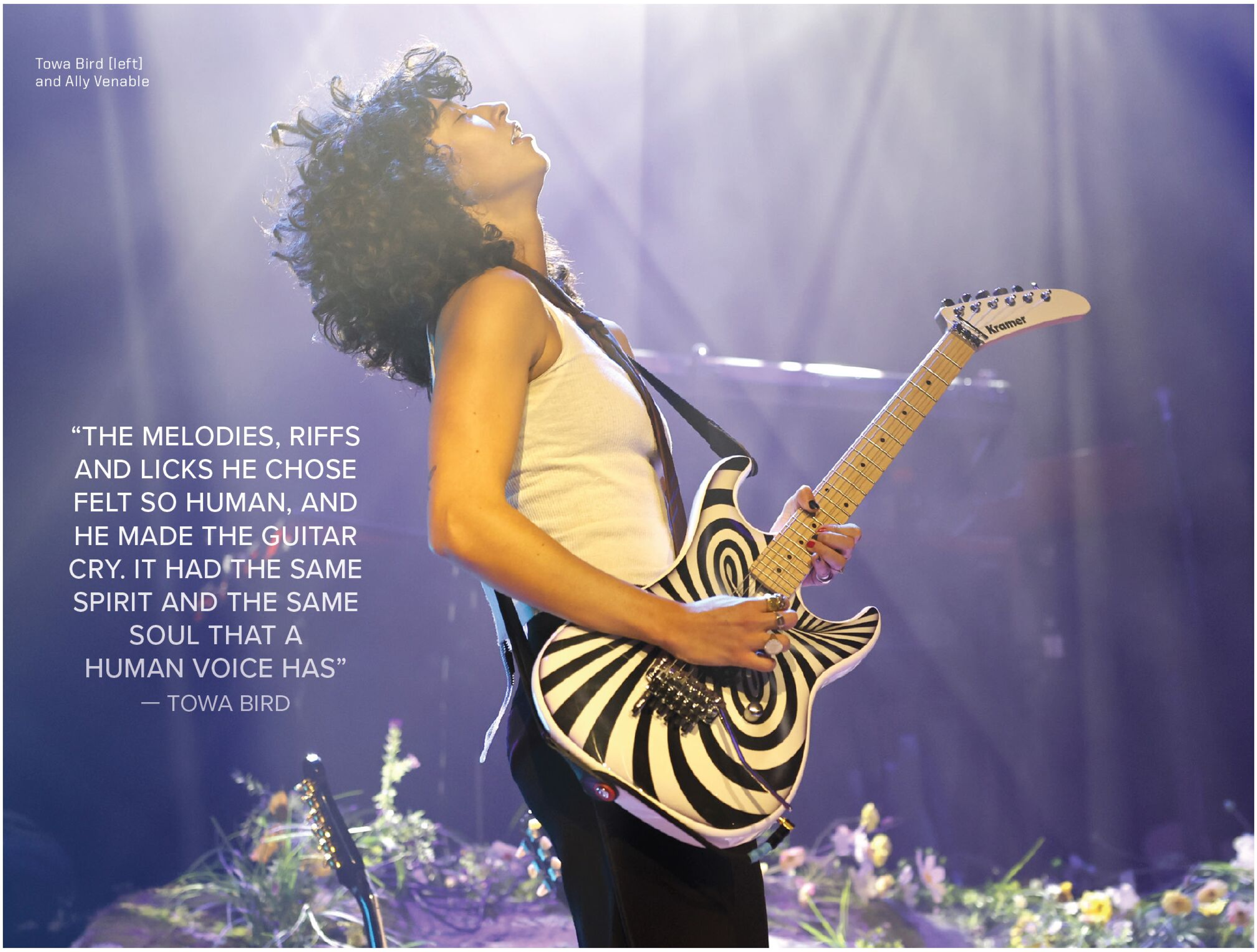


EVER WONDER WHAT it might have been like to see the Jimi Hendrix Experience in action before they achieved international fame? Until now, if you weren't there, you'd probably be left wondering forever. Thankfully, Experience Hendrix L.L.C. partnered with Sony Entertainment's Legacy Recordings to give fans a taste of what they've been missing via Jimi Hendrix Experience: Hollywood Bowl, August 18, 1967.

Sure, we all know that Jimi Hendrix, Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell were a sight to behold live, but the Hollywood Bowl show was notable because it found the trio in front of 17,000-plus Americans who – for the most part, anyway – had no idea who these three loud, interesting-looking dudes were. And considering that most of said attendees were there to dig on the dreamy sounds of the Mamas & the Papas, one can assume – especially since their reaction to Hendrix's guitar machismo was mostly soft clapping – that their minds were blown. And yours will be, too, as you bask in the glory of "Fire" and "Purple Haze," along with a searing version of "Killing Floor."

Recorded just days before the release of Are You Experienced, and having previously walked off a tour with the Monkees due to audiences being "unappreciative," urgency was clearly afoot. But that's not all; on the visual side of things, you can check in with several eyewitnesses of the show via Monterey Pop to the Hollywood Bowl, a mini-documentary detailing Hendrix's journey to crack the States after conquering the U.K. Prepared by Janie Hendrix, John McDermott, Hendrix producer Eddie Kramer and mastering engineer Bernie Grundman, Hollywood Bowl, August 18, 1967, is a time capsule showcasing Hendrix overcoming a bewildered audience and unleashing a 10-song set that oozes-with-molten-lava. Ironically, this show would be one of the Mamas & the Papas' last, while Hendrix's star would ascend to heights unimaginable. How's that for a changing of the guard?

– Andrew Daly



Towa Bird [left] and Ally Venable

"THE MELODIES, RIFFS AND LICKS HE CHOSE FELT SO HUMAN, AND HE MADE THE GUITAR CRY. IT HAD THE SAME SPIRIT AND THE SAME SOUL THAT A HUMAN VOICE HAS" — TOWA BIRD

ativity and the freedom of what was in his mind, and that was the most revolutionary part of him. It's so experimental. He plays blues, but it's not blues. It's just so freeform, and that's what I love."

Texas blues guitarist Ally Venable, who has five solo albums to her credit — including her 2023 set, *Real Gone*, which includes collaborations with Buddy Guy and Joe Bonamassa — finds inspiration in Hendrix's songwriting legacy. Tackling "Castles Made of Sand" for the Experience Hendrix 80th anniversary concert, which took place last year in Austin, renewed her fascination with his approach.

"It opened up a new perspective [*for me*] on how he approached his songwriting," Venable says. "There's, like, three different stories in one song, and each verse is its own story. He puts a picture in your head, and it's this whole creative experience. And the way Hendrix sings is not the normal way people phrase things; his phrasing is so different."

For Venable, Hendrix's overall creativity as a musician makes him "probably the most influential guitar player of all," for all the stylistic quirks no other players were using at the time. "One of the main things Hendrix is known for in his guitar playing are his chord structures and the way he structures his songs, these really intricate chord progressions nobody else was doing, and still a lot of people don't do now because it's so difficult," she says. "Also, the things he would try in the studio. He would overlay guitar parts on top of guitar parts — and the backwards playing... Nobody really did that either."

But the techniques Hendrix championed that made the biggest impression on successive generations of players might be those from his August 1969 performance of "The Star Spangled Banner" at the Woodstock Music and Art Fair in Bethel, New York.

Simultaneously patriotic and subversive, Hendrix reimagined the National Anthem as a fuzz-drenched, gnashing display of trills, bends and tremolo divebombs that sustained into washes of feedback and soared into the early morning sky. There had been guitar heroes before, sure — who could forget the "Clapton is God" graffiti in 1966? — but those three minutes and 43 seconds of revolutionary sound cast Hendrix among the immortals.

"He was able to make his guitar sound like so much more than just a guitar," Tesler-Mabé says. "He found ways to emulate human voices and screaming and bombs and warfare."

AS **cosmic as Hendrix could be** on extended journeys like "1983 (A Merman I Should Turn to Be)," and as tender as he was on "May This Be Love" and "Little Wing," Hendrix also helped create heavy rock music before "heavy" was anything more than bad Sixties slang for "serious." He wasn't alone in this respect; on their landmark 1964 hit "You Really Got Me," the Kinks upped the ante for rock 'n' roll with perhaps the first hard-rock riff. And in 1968, "Helter Skelter" by the Beatles and "Born to Be Wild" by Steppenwolf joined the party.

But on the first song of the U.S. version of *Are You Experienced*, Hendrix preceded both with "Purple Haze," a proto-heavy metal song in every respect. While drum-

JASON KEMPLIN (BIRD) PHILLIP FARAONE (VENABLE)

"THERE'S THREE DIFFERENT STORIES IN ONE SONG, AND EACH VERSE IS ITS OWN STORY"
— ALLY VENABLE

mer Mitch Mitchell and bassist Noel Redding pound away in lockstep rhythm, Hendrix slices through with the song's signature descending riff, then shout-sings atop the main E7♯9 - G - A verse progression. Structurally, there is no chorus but a solo followed by a return to the opening motif, then a siren-esque, ringing double-stop with a whole-step bend until the song fades out.

"There's something so brave about those two [*opening octave*] notes," Sover says about the song that changed his life and put him on a path to pursue music. "What captured me the most would probably be the tone. It was strong, and it came in with bravado. It was like, 'What is this?'"

"There's this amazing swagger, and you start to notice there are a lot of phrases where he's off the beat, but he always comes back in a way that's so interesting and expressive," Tesler-Mabé says. "Like on 'Purple Haze,' there's this one line in the intro that has this incredible behind-the-beat swagger to it. I never heard a player with so much feel and freedom in his rhythm playing."

While Van Halen successfully updated "You Really Got Me" on the band's eponymous 1978 debut album, no such move has been made on "Purple Haze." Frank Zappa and the Cure have both reimagined the song in their own ways, and admirably enough, but neither improved on the original. The same might be said for "Manic Depression," although plenty have tried (including Jeff Beck & Seal in 1993). Aggressive bands like Carnivore and Nomeansno covered it, and it's also featured on Sover's latest album [His-Story]. Sandwiched between "Temptation," with its "Red House" shuffle, and the heartland rock of "One Way Train," Sover's faithful take puts the chop he learned from Hendrix on full display.

Progressive metallers Moon Tooth, propelled by the shredding of Nick Lee, recorded a particularly ballsy version in 2017 that solidified their reputation while retaining much of what Hendrix laid down.

"I wanted it to still pay tribute to him and the band, but I wanted it to sound like Moon Tooth," Lee says. "One thing I wasn't gonna try to do is the solo exactly note for note, because my guess is he probably just plugged in and fucking ripped his solo. It wasn't like he sat with manuscript paper and wrote it all out. So I just plugged in and improvised a bunch of solos and picked my favorite one. It feels true to the solo. It pays tribute to the feel of it more than the actual music theory part.

"It's almost upsetting when someone that's into heavy music hasn't gotten to the point where they appreciate Hendrix and those records, just because of how heavy it is and how it runs a gamut of different types of music, but still sounds like him. It's all coming from his hands."

Ayron Jones, whose 2020 single "Take Me Away" drew a sonic connection between Hendrix and Tom Morello, grew up in the same central Seattle neighborhood as his hero and met people who were part of his early life, including one of his babysitters, grounding the legend in real and familiar places and faces. Growing up in the Nineties, Jones attributed the source of his hometown's grunge scene with its original rock star — an association few made at the time, but which makes perfect sense in retrospect.

"The Seattle sound really started with Jimi Hendrix," Jones says. "Look at a lot of the stuff he did, and look at the guitar players from the grunge era. He was the prototype when it comes to all the music that we love, all these things we think of as innovative sounds."

The most obvious example might be Mike McCready, whose Hendrix-via-SRV playing on popular Pearl Jam B-side "Yellow Ledbetter" and devotion to wah-wah licks played on a Stratocaster gave him away. And recall Kim Thayil's use of feedback noise in Soundgarden — and even

"Band of Gypsys was the first funk rock band," Marcus Machado says. "After Jimi passed, that's when Funkadelic and Eddie Hazel and all that stuff came about"

Jerry Cantrell, who has cited Hendrix as a primary influence.

And let's not forget the hard funk-rock hybrid Hendrix pioneered on *Axis: Bold As Love* cut "Little Miss Lover" or the all-timer "Fire", from his debut. He returned to that feel on the songs immortalized on the live record *Band of Gypsys* in 1970 — "Power to Love" has the kind of riff Morello would later write in Rage Against the Machine, and "Machine Gun" features Jimi's use of percussive, pitchless "chuck-a" fret-hand-muted strums that Morello would employ on songs like "Bombtrack."

Progressive neo-soul and funk artist Marcus Machado, who discovered Hendrix early enough to play "The Wind Cries Mary" for his kindergarten graduation, worked his way backward through the Experience catalog from *Electric Ladyland* before landing hard on *Band of Gypsys*, which he credits as the first true funk rock album.

"*Electric Ladyland* was one thing, but *Band of Gypsys* was a whole other spectrum," he says. "A lot of people don't know, but that's where George Clinton and Parliament-Funkadelic got their stuff. Band of Gypsys was the first funk rock band; after Jimi passed, that's when Funkadelic and Eddie Hazel and all that came about."

It was the funky "Fire" that stood out most to TikTok star-turned-recording artist Towa Bird, who cranked *Are You Experienced* on her headphones while riding the school bus in middle school.

"The way he sang through the guitar and made the guitar into another human voice was the thing that stood out, like he was the lead singer — but the guitar was also the lead singer," she says. "I thought that was so rare and unique. The melodies, riffs and licks he chose felt so human, and he made the guitar cry. It has the same spirit and the same soul that a human voice has.

"I think the way he uses really simple forms and phrases over and over again, it's like ear candy and earwormy," she adds. "He uses simple pentatonic boxes and works around that and says so much with so little. Especially his call-and-response technique where he'll sing and then respond with the guitar."

TO **listen to Hendrix is to submit to his trip**, and each generation of guitar players continues to embark on a lifelong journey led by the otherworldly adventurer of *Electric Ladyland*, the visceral dreamer of *Axis: Bold As Love*, and the hitmaking revolutionary of *Are You Experienced*. While it's impossible to understate Hendrix's influence on guitar and pop culture, his legacy has always rested in the hands of his fans.

"I know a lot of the young rockers and young blues guitar players from my generation," Ingram says, "and we all have a little bit of Hendrix in us, like Taz [*Brandon Niederauer*] and Quinn Sullivan. I don't care how anyone tries to put it, Hendrix is somewhere in everybody's playing."

Because of that undeniable lineage, the innovations and emotional range Hendrix brought to the instrument and music itself continue to find audiences.

"I'm always finding different ways to be an emotional guitar player, and I think that that is really how Jimi carries on," Jones says. "Finding ways to move crowds and try to connect in this emotional way, because for Jimi the guitar became a spiritual device as much as it is an instrument. I'm always trying to connect with people by using my instrument to connect to the spirit."

"The true genius is when you're older, still listening to it and finding new things or figuring out what he was really saying," Sover concludes. "What inspires me more than anything is this futuristic thing in his music that keeps the music alive today, where nothing is outdated in what he's singing about."

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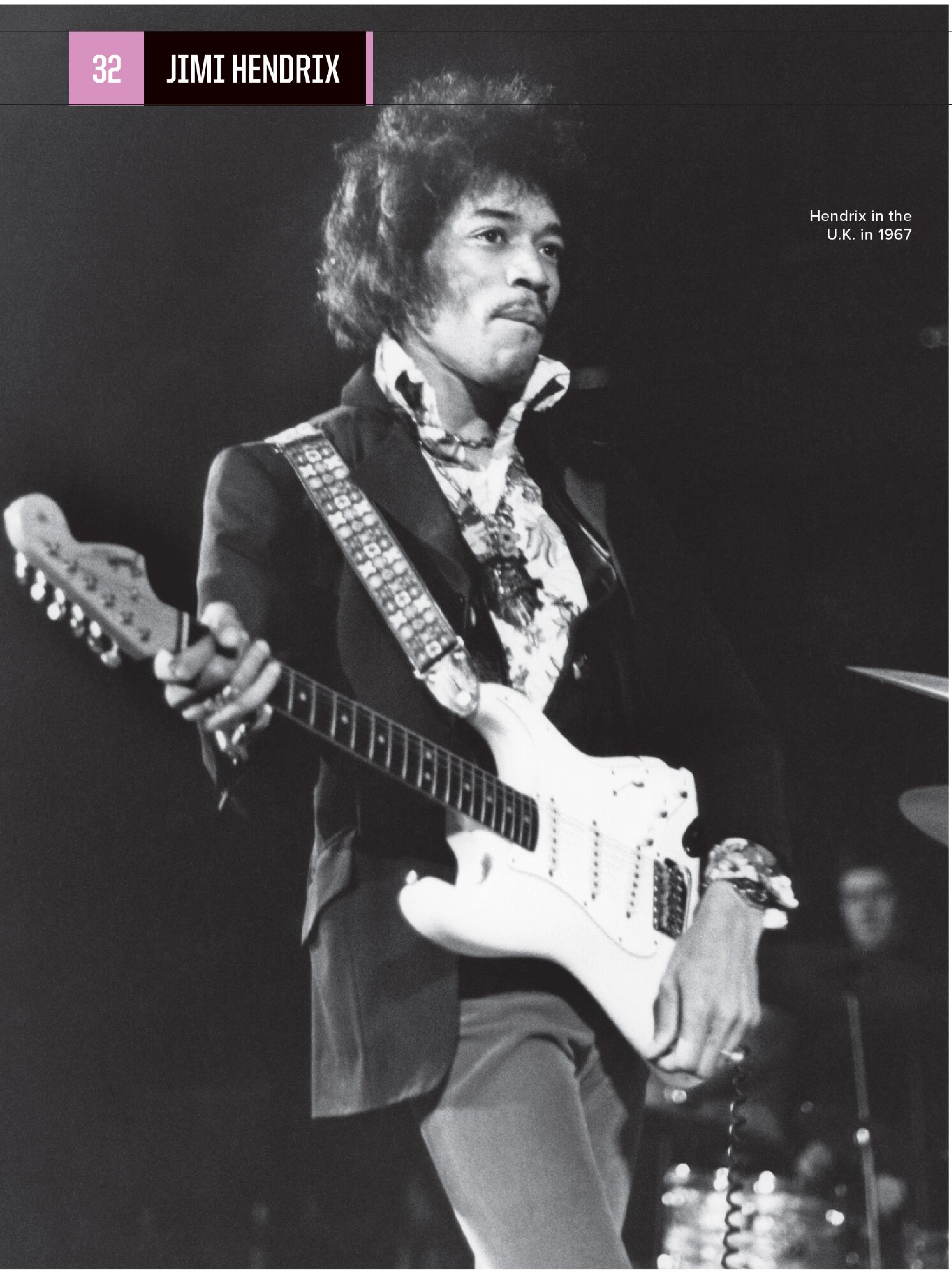


Hendrix in the U.K. in 1967

UNDER HIS WINGS

RESIDENT JIMI HENDRIX AUTHORITY, **ANDY ALEDORT**, DEMONSTRATES HOW THE LEGENDARY, GROUNDBREAKING GUITARIST STILL INFLUENCES THE MODERN ROCK, BLUES AND R&B STYLES OF SIX OF TODAY'S MOST ADMIRED PLAYERS

BY ANDY ALEDORT

JIMI HENDRIX IS rock's most important and influential guitarist, rightfully revered as one of the most significant musicians of all time. More than a half-century ago, the Jimi Hendrix Experience's 1967 debut release, *Are You Experienced*, included this bold proclamation: "Be forewarned. Used to be an Experience meant making you a bit older. This one makes you wider. Jimi Hendrix breaks the world into interesting fragments, and then reassembles it. You hear with new ears after being Experienced." Sixties record-company hype? Absolutely, but also 100 percent true.

All these decades later, Hendrix's playing on *Are You Experienced* and his subsequent recorded performances remains among the freshest and most exciting music ever heard, and his influence as a guitarist, composer and sonic innovator continues to resonate with today's youngest generation of guitarists. In this lesson, we'll explore how Hendrix's music has inspired the distinct, signature styles of six of today's top players — Melanie Faye, Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, Marcus Machado, Ayla Tesler-Mabé, Joanne Shaw Taylor and Ayron Jones.

VAL WILMER/REDFERNS

MELANIE FAYE

TWENTY-FIVE-YEAR-old Melanie Faye is a phenomenal guitar player from Alabama, now based in Nashville, who brings a jazz/R&B sensibility to Hendrix's music, as evidenced in her creative and expressive arrangement of his classic ballad "Little Wing." **FIGURE 1** illustrates some of the techniques and chord voicings Faye employs in her cover of the song. The example begins with a beautiful Eadd2 chord voicing played in 1st position, which is reverse raked by dragging the pick upward across all of the strings, sounding each string individually while allowing all of them to ring together. This is followed by lush voicings of F♯m7add4, G♯m♭6 (or Eadd2/G♯) and Amaj9 that include the open top two strings. You'll hear Hendrix utilize these kinds of chord voicings on songs such as "May This Be Love," "One Rainy Wish," "Angel" and others.

In bar 4, an Am9 voicing is embellished with a quick slide up and down the high E string between the 7th and 8th frets, followed by a pull-off to A at the 5th fret. Faye loves to use quick slides and pull-offs like these, and you'll hear her utilize this technique a lot in her playing. The bar ends with a descending lick that resolves to E major in the subsequent bar, setting up the shift to her take on "Little Wing."

In bars 6 and 7, played over Em and G, quick hammer/pulls are used as chordal embellishments in the same kind of way that Hendrix decorated his phrases in "Little Wing," as well as in songs like "Castles Made of Sand," "Bold As Love" and "Have You Ever Been (to Electric Ladyland)." At the end of bar 7, a G♯ diminished 7 chord is arpeggiated (each note is picked individually) setting up the subsequent Am7add4 in bar 8. The jazz sensibility is revealed via the E♭ maj♯5 and E♭m7♭5 chords at the end of this bar, and this colorful move brings us back to the tonic, Em7add4, which is articulated with a quick double hammer-on and more chordal arpeggiation.

Bars 10 and 11 include wide-stretch chord voicings for Bm9 and Am9, and bar 11 culminates with a very Hendrix-like descending phrase that sets up the Gadd9 chord in bar 12. The following Fadd9, Csus2 and Dadd4 chords are all

FIG. 1 MELANIE FAYE

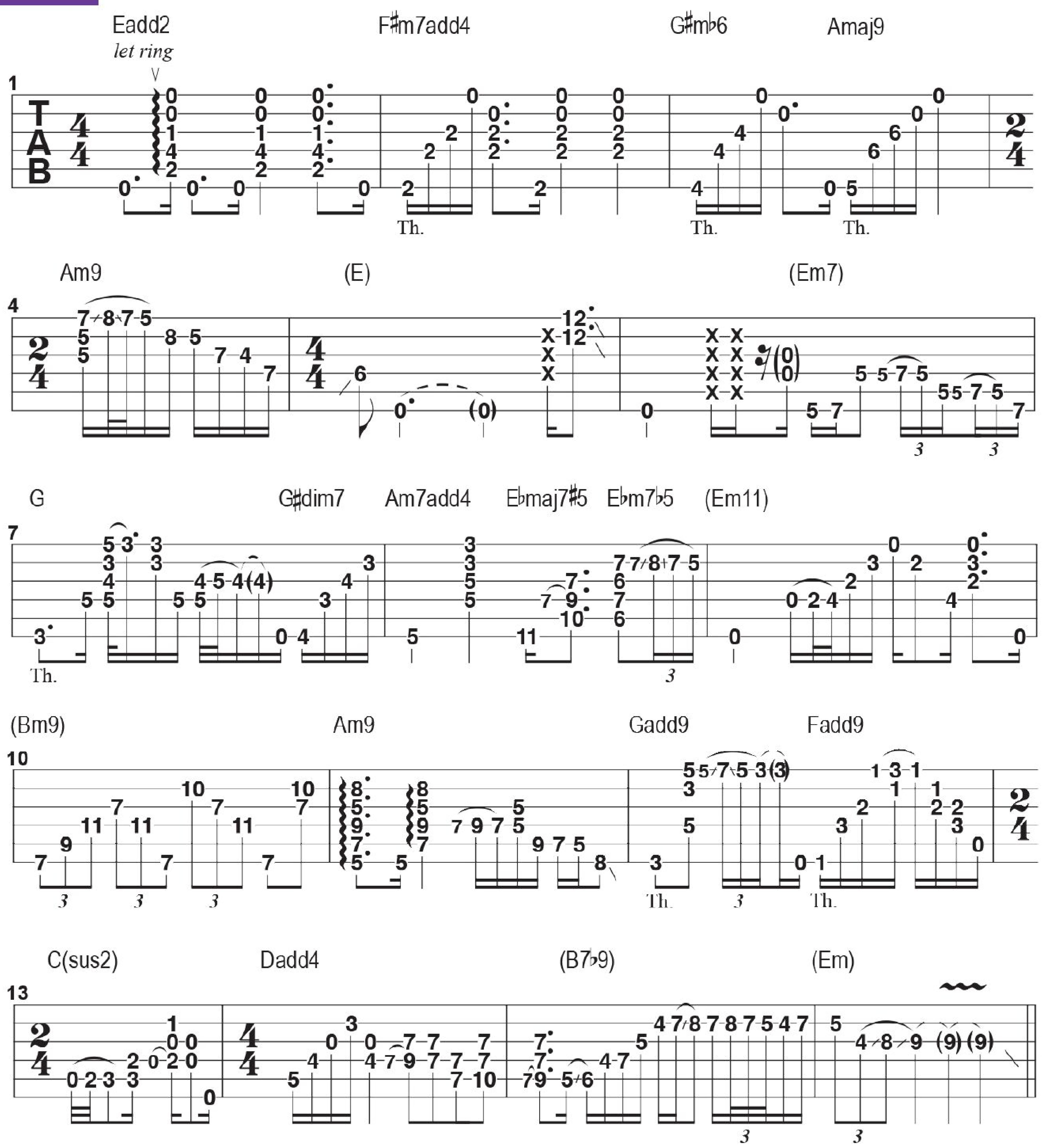
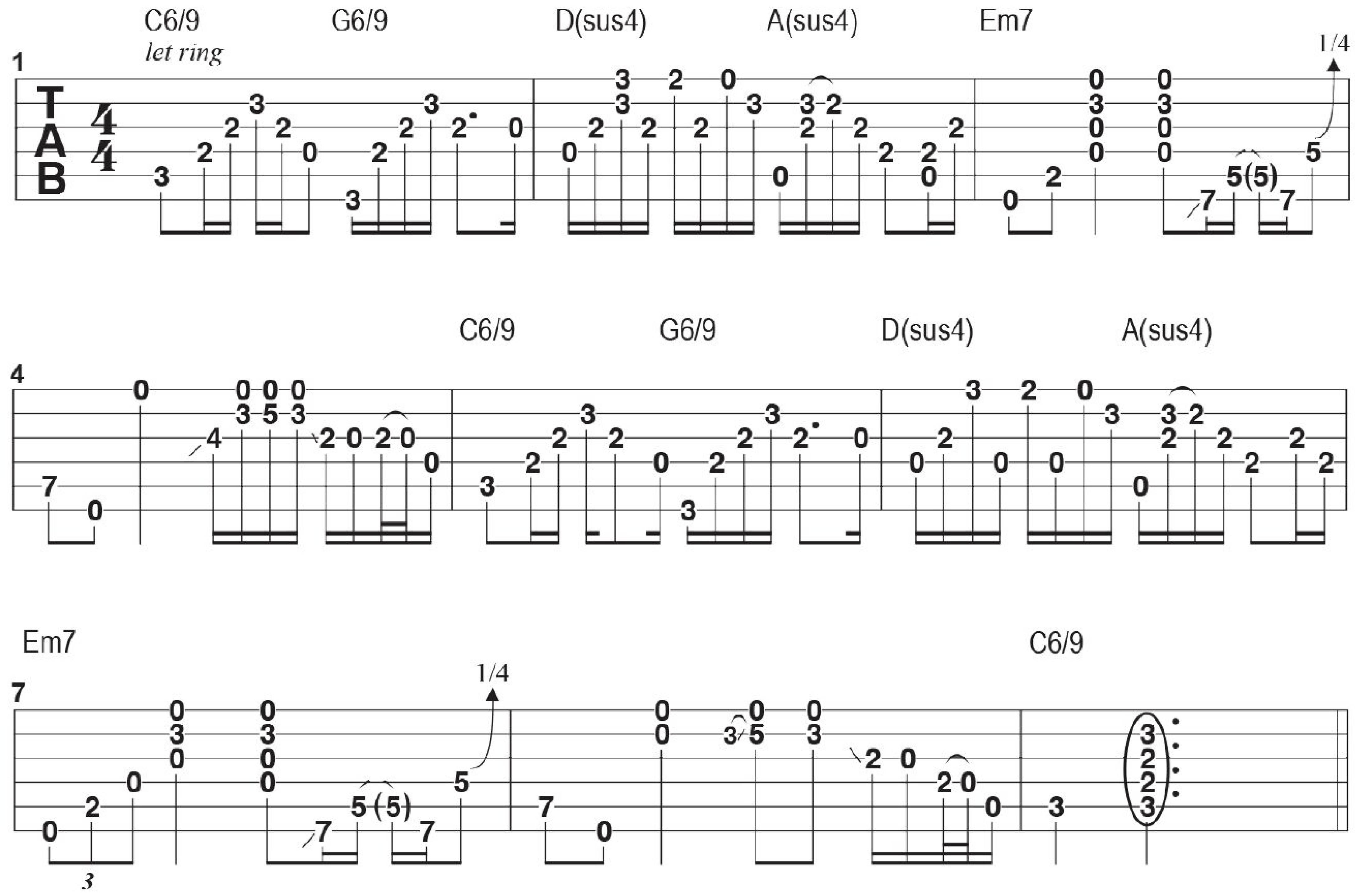


FIG. 2 CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM



arpeggiated, and in bar 15, a single-note phrase outlines an E♭ diminished 7 arpeggio (E♭, F♯, A, C) and alludes to a B7♭9 chord, which then resolves satisfyingly to Em.

CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM

ONE OF THE MOST exciting young blues guitarists on the scene today is Clarksdale, Mississippi's Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, who, at just 24 years old, has turned heads and earned accolades far and wide. Writer Tom Moon describes Ingram's playing as "Astounding... it's almost as if he is singing through the guitar." Ingram often covers "Hey Joe" and, not unlike Faye, he likes to substitute more complex chord voicings during the progression before unleashing very Hendrix-inspired, fiery blues-rock solos.

FIGURE 2 presents a rhythm part akin to Ingram's approach to "Hey Joe." As opposed to sticking with the original song's standard major-chord progression of C - G - D - A - E, the harmony is broadened here, starting with arpeggiations of C6/9 and G6/9. Both of these chords include the notes E and A, fretted on the D and G strings at the 2nd fret, respectively. This is followed by Dsus4 resolving to D and Asus4 resolving to A. The progression wraps up with a 1st-position Em7 voicing that includes the open D, G and high E strings.

The song's form is built from a repeating four-bar progression, and at the end of each four-bar group, as shown in bars 4 and 8 in this example, signature single-note fills are added, which set up the return to the top of the form.

FIGURE 3 is an eight-bar solo played over this same repeating progression in Ingram's style. Utilizing a wah pedal with a nod toward Hendrix's sonic palette, the solo is rooted in lines based on the E minor pentatonic scale (E, G, A, B, D) and the E blues scale (E, G, A, B♭, B, D). It begins with a heavily vibrato-ed whole-step bend from D up to E, played on the B string's 15th fret. The phrasing in bars 1 and 2 is based primarily on 16th-notes and 16th-note triplets. In bar 3, a quick descending phrase is played across beats 3 and 4 in a rhythm of 32nd notes, à la Ingram's fiery soloing approach.

The remainder of the solo is

FIG. 3

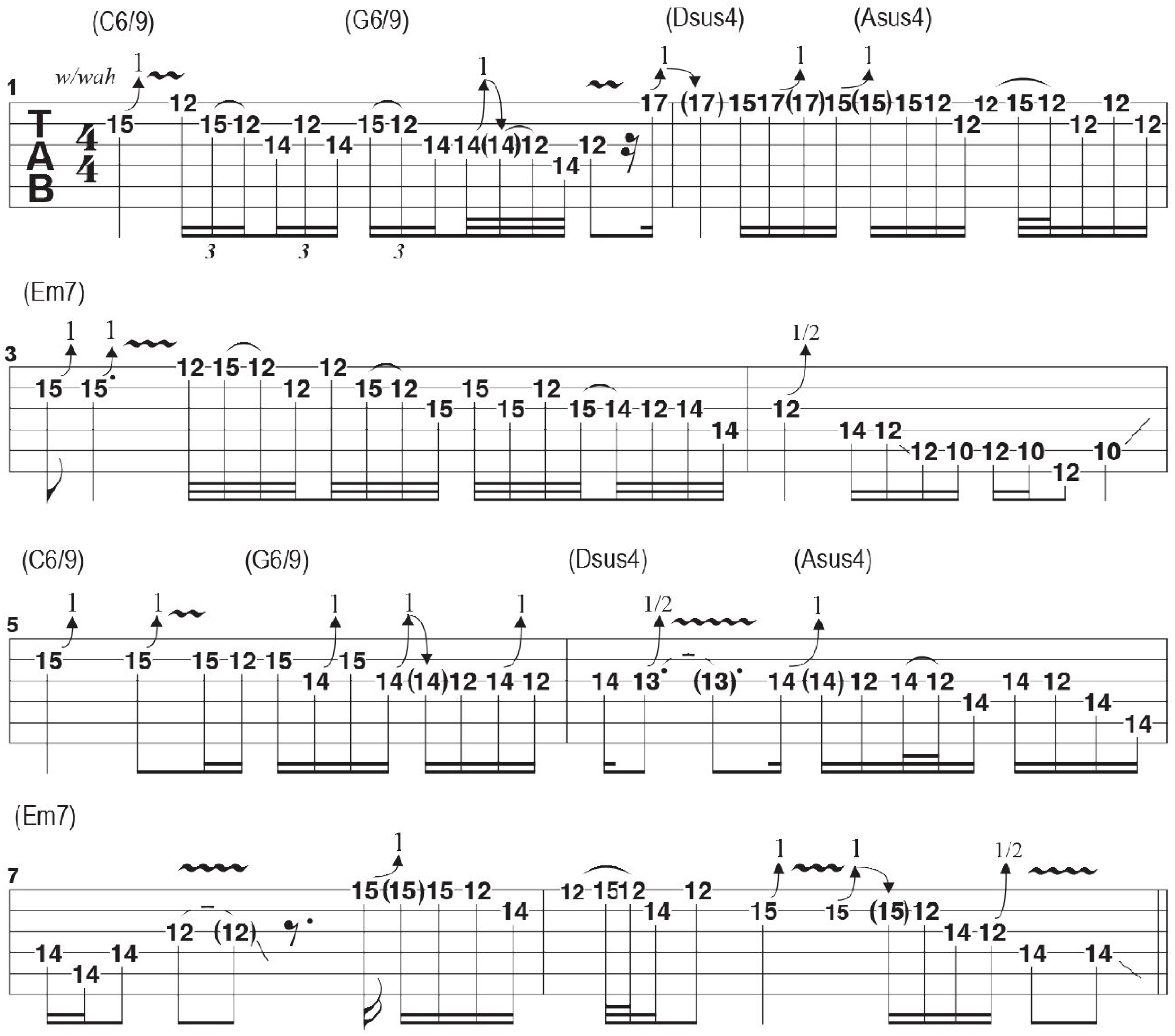


FIG. 4 MARCUS MACHADO

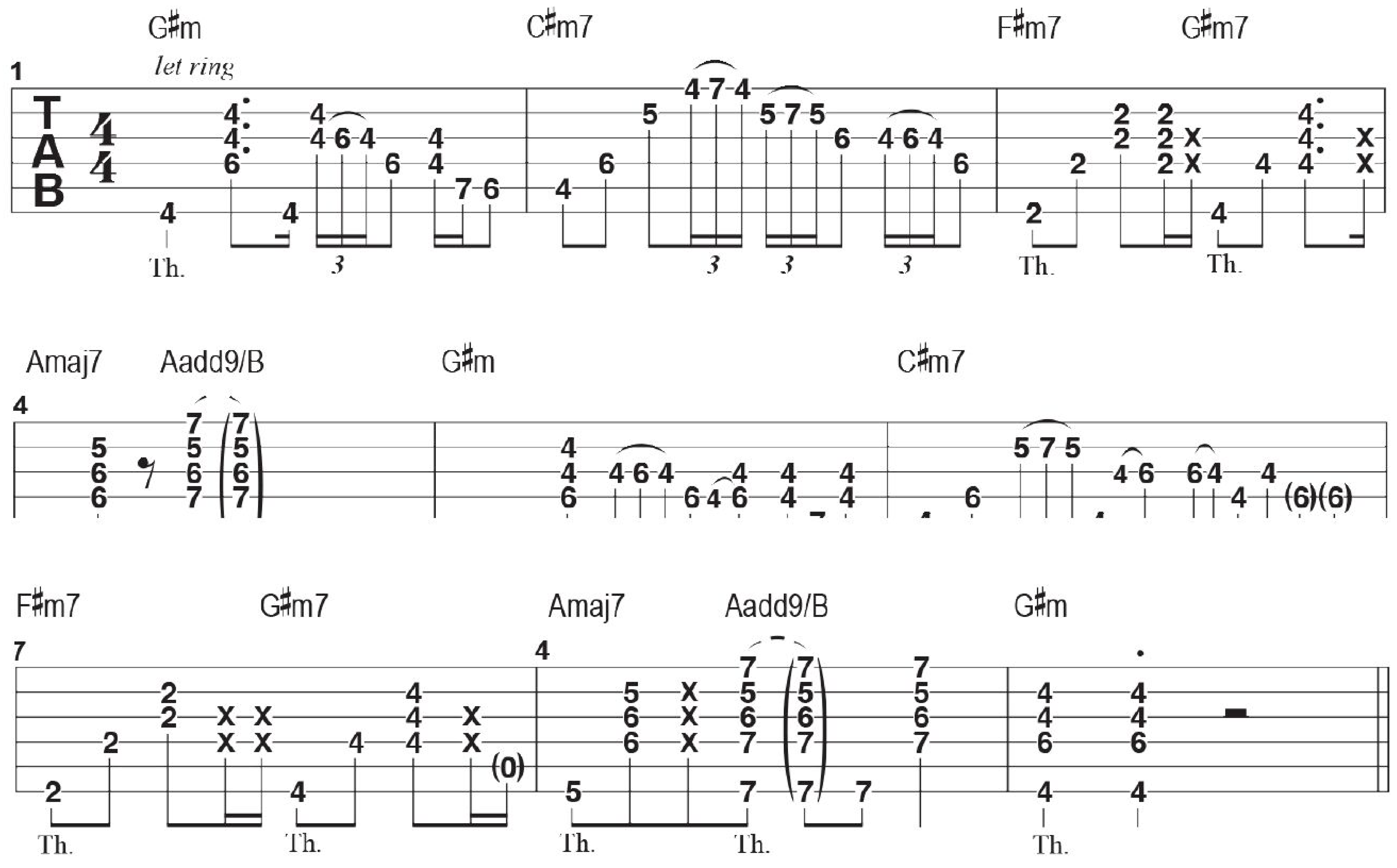
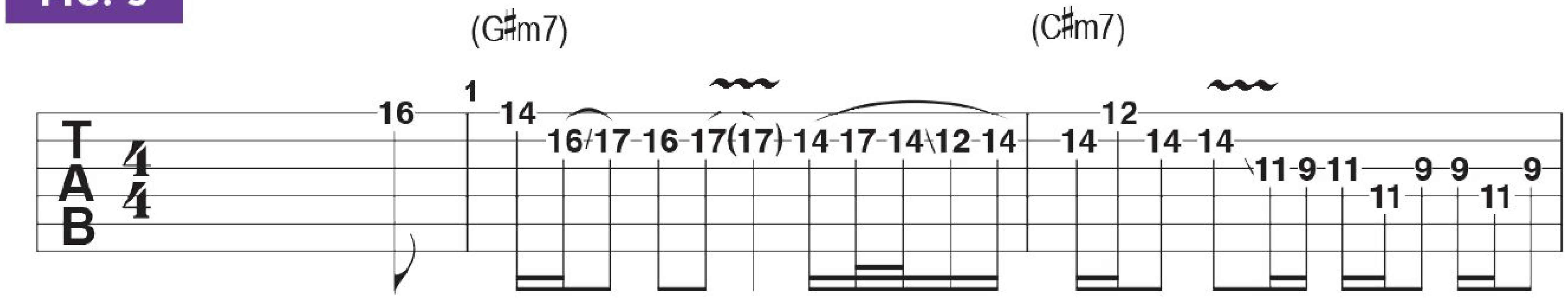


FIG. 5



played primarily in 16th notes, with an emphasis on lines that evoke a clear sense of melodic development, combined with a beautifully controlled finger vibrato. Signature elements like these make Ingram's soloing sound so pleasing and appealing to listen to. Along with the influence of Hendrix, one can also pick up on techniques that Jimi had learned from listening to his heroes, such as Albert King, B.B. King, Buddy Guy and Otis Rush.

MARCUS MACHADO

MARCUS MACHADO TIPS his hat to his primary influences with the title of his debut album, 2021's *Aquarius Purple*, as the guitarist cites Hendrix and Prince as major inspirations. Marcus' music is more rooted in classical and contemporary R&B/soul than Faye's or Ingram's, but one can hear elements of Hendrix's influence in his playing, as well as the influence of the great, pioneering R&B/soul singer, songwriter and guitarist Curtis Mayfield.

FIGURES 4 and **5** are played in Machado's style. **FIGURE 4** presents a repeating four-bar rhythm part that evokes the classic soul style, built from the progression G♯m - C♯m7 - F♯m - G♯m7 - Amaj7 - Aadd9/B. We're in the implied key of E major here, though an E chord is never actually played. As shown throughout the figure, the initial G♯m and C♯m7 chords are embellished with single-string hammer/pulls, a technique Henxdrix learned from Mayfield and Bobby Womack and can be heard on "Little Wing," "Villanova Junction" and "Castles Made of Sand." Be sure to keep a firm grip on each chord voicing as you perform these melodic embellishments, allowing the held notes to ring.

FIGURE 5 offers a solo played in Machado's style. The lines are firmly rooted in the E major scale (E, F♯, G♯, A, B, C♯, D♯), with specific pitches targeting the underlying chord tones in order to strengthen the connection between the solo and the progression. For example, the solo begins on a G♯ note, the root note of the accompanying G♯m chord, after which the line descends and lands on C♯, just as the C♯m7 chord is sounded.

Across most of bars 5 and 6, a fast descending phrase is played in a combination of 16th notes and 32nd notes, articulated repeatedly with hammer-ons, pull-offs and finger slides. One can hear Hendrix utilize this technique in his solos on "May This Be Love," "Hear My Train a' Comin'" and "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)."

The improvisation in bar 8 is based on sliding octave shapes fretted on the high E and G strings. Hendrix employed sliding octaves in many of his songs and solos, prime examples being "Third Stone from the Sun" and "Villanova Junction." The example wraps up with lines based on the E major pentatonic scale (E, F♯, G♯, B, C♯), a scale that works well over all of the chords in the progression.

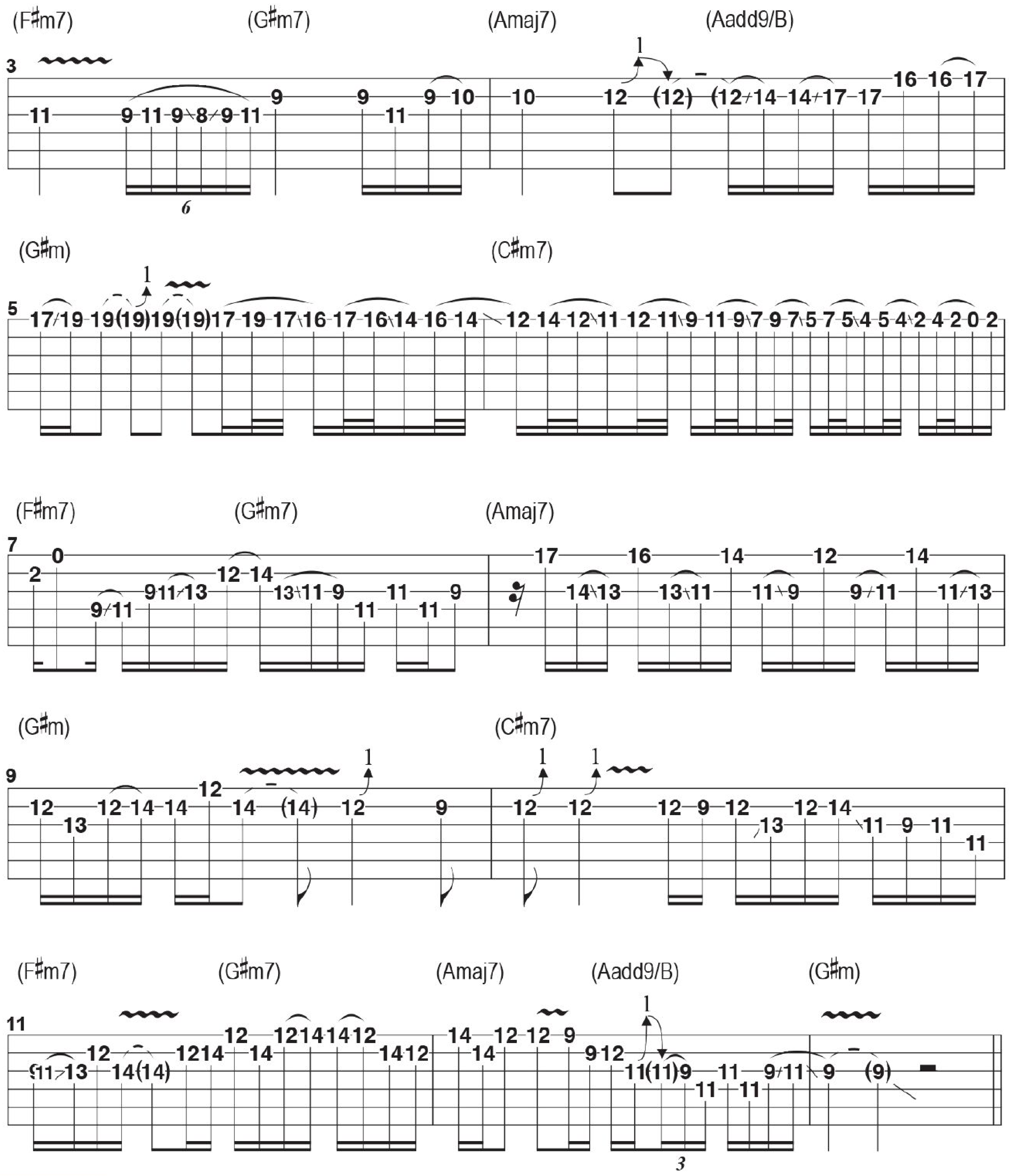
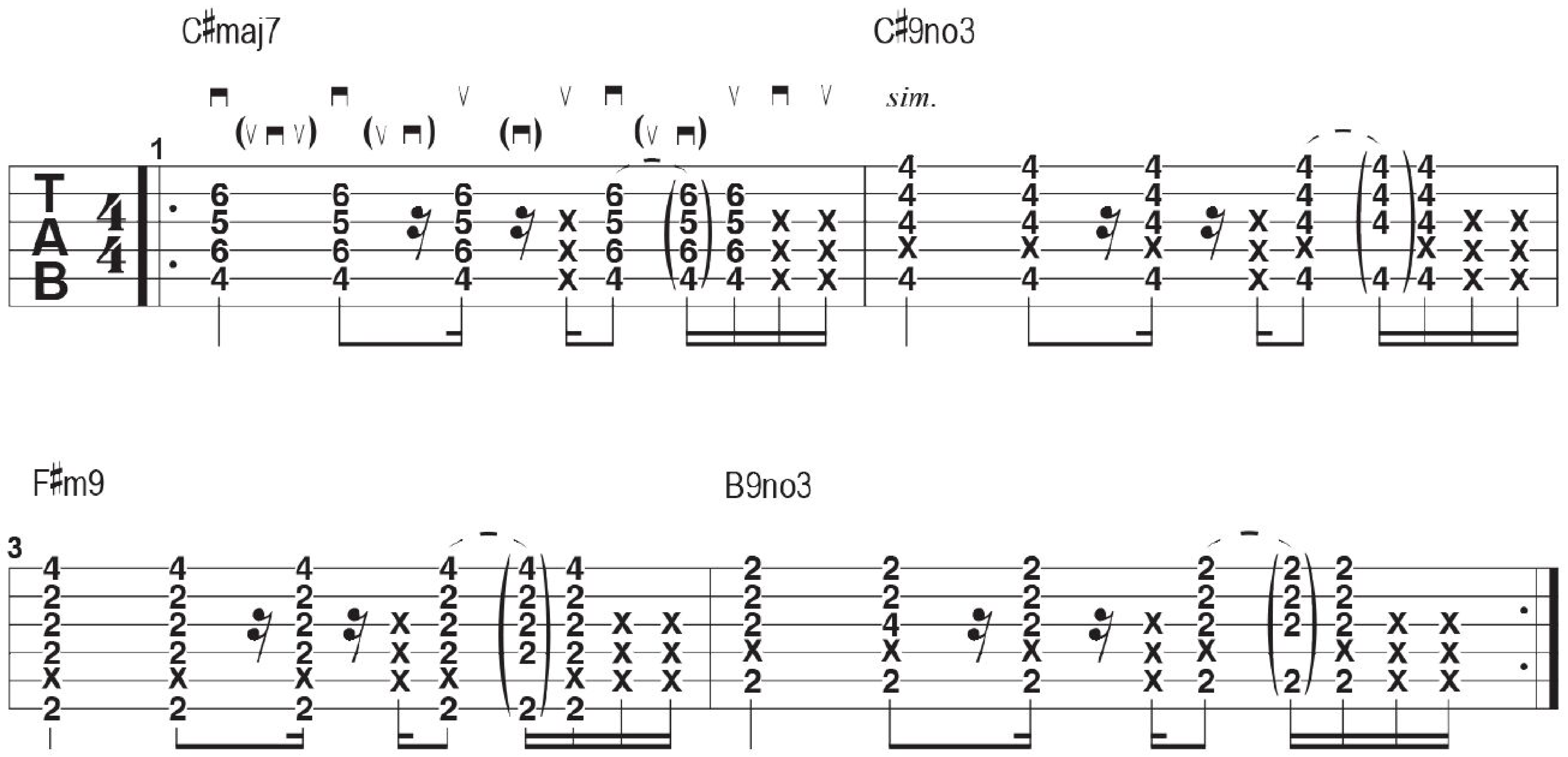


FIG. 6 AYLA TESLER-MABÉ



AYLA TESLER-MABÉ

JUST 22, AYLA Tesler-Mabé is a guitarist and multi-instrumentalist from Vancouver, Canada. Tesler-Mabé has a very unique style, marrying contemporary R&B music with an aggressive, blues-drenched soloing style that also combines elements of jazz.

Set to a funky, moderate-tempo R&B/soul groove, **FIGURE 6** is a repeating four-bar progression that moves from C♯maj7 to C♯9no3 to F♯m9 to B9. All of the chords are played with the same syncopated rhythmic phrasing and flowing 16th-note pendulum strumming technique, with fret-hand muted "dead-string" accents added (indicated by X's).

FIGURE 7 presents an improvised solo played over this progression in Ayla's style. It sticks primarily with the C♯ major pentatonic scale (C♯, D♯, E♯, G♯, A♯), with nods toward the influence of Hendrix, as well as that of B.B. King. Tesler-Mabé also uses a hard pick attack, which adds expressiveness and assertiveness to her lines. Over the F♯m9 chord, the solo moves into jazzier territory, with the notes of an Amaj7 arpeggio (A, C♯, E, G♯) superimposed over F♯m7, implying an F♯m9 sound (F♯, A, C♯, E, G♯), starting on the minor 3rd, A.

In the second half of bar 5 into bar 6, the solo moves up to 14th position with blues-type phrases played out of what is often referred to as the "B.B. box," leaning on the notes A♯, C♯, D♯, E♯ and G♯.

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

Another of today's premiere guitarists is Britain's Joanne Shaw Taylor, whose 2021 release *The Blues Album* reached Number 1 on the *Billboard* Blues Albums chart. Shaw Taylor is also a multiple winner of the best Female Vocalist and Songwriter of the Year at the British Blues Awards shows. *The Blues Album*, as well as *Blues from the Heart Live* and *Nobody's Fool*, were released on Joe Bonamassa's Keeping the Blues Alive label.

In 2017, Shaw Taylor released a video of herself performing live at Hendrix's one-time London flat at 23 Brook St. in London's West End. "Without Jimi Hendrix's music, I wouldn't be the songwriter or guitarist I am," Shaw Taylor said.

FIGURE 8 shows a repeating one-bar riff, played in a 12/8 shuffle feel. This one-bar "boogie" riff is reminiscent of the music of John Lee Hooker and Canned Heat's "On the Road Again," as well as

FIG. 7

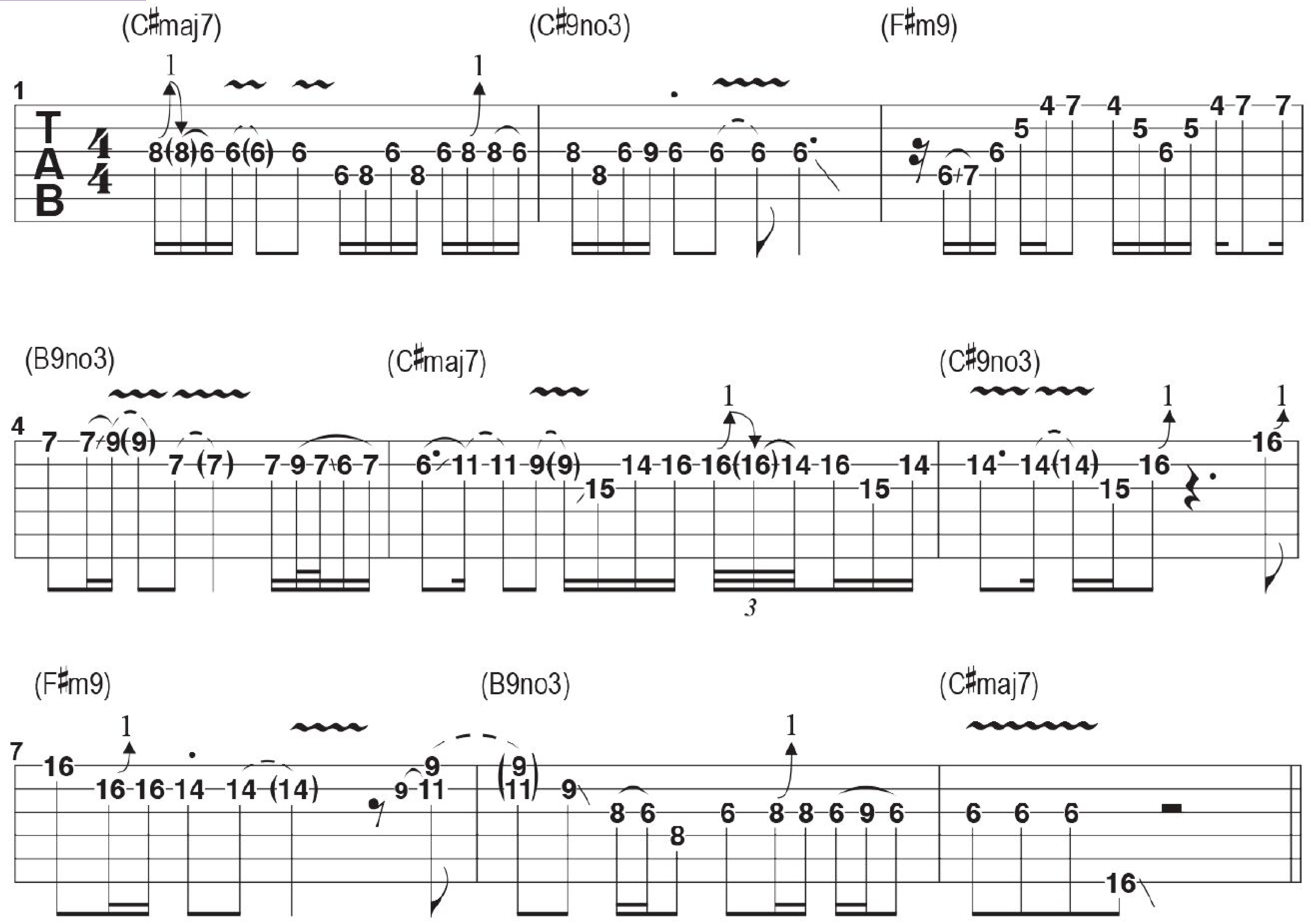


FIG. 8 JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

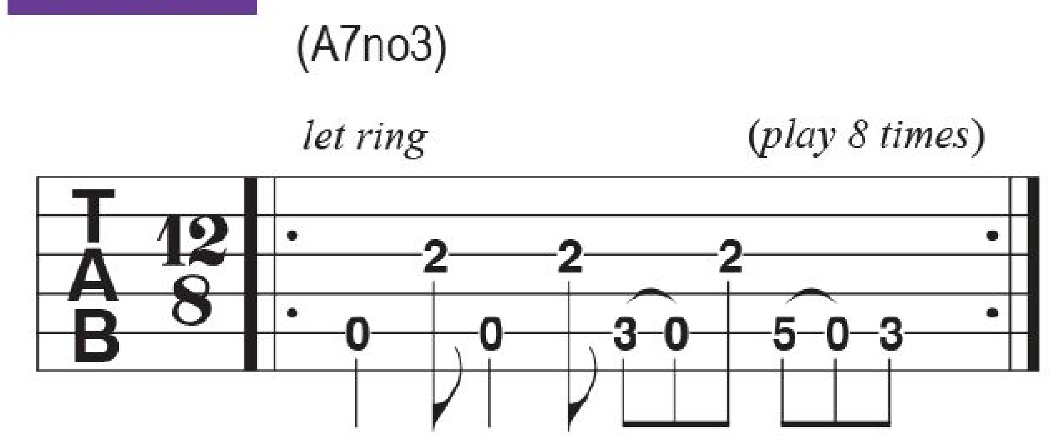
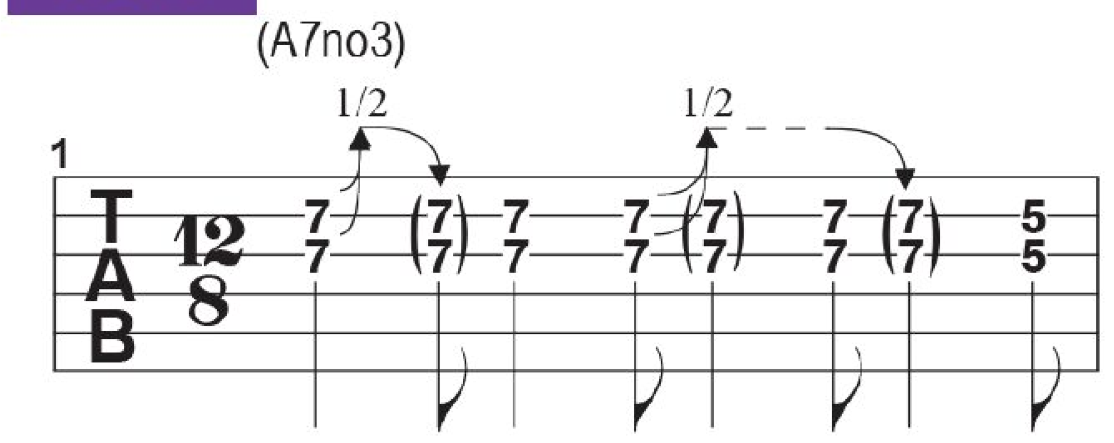


FIG. 9



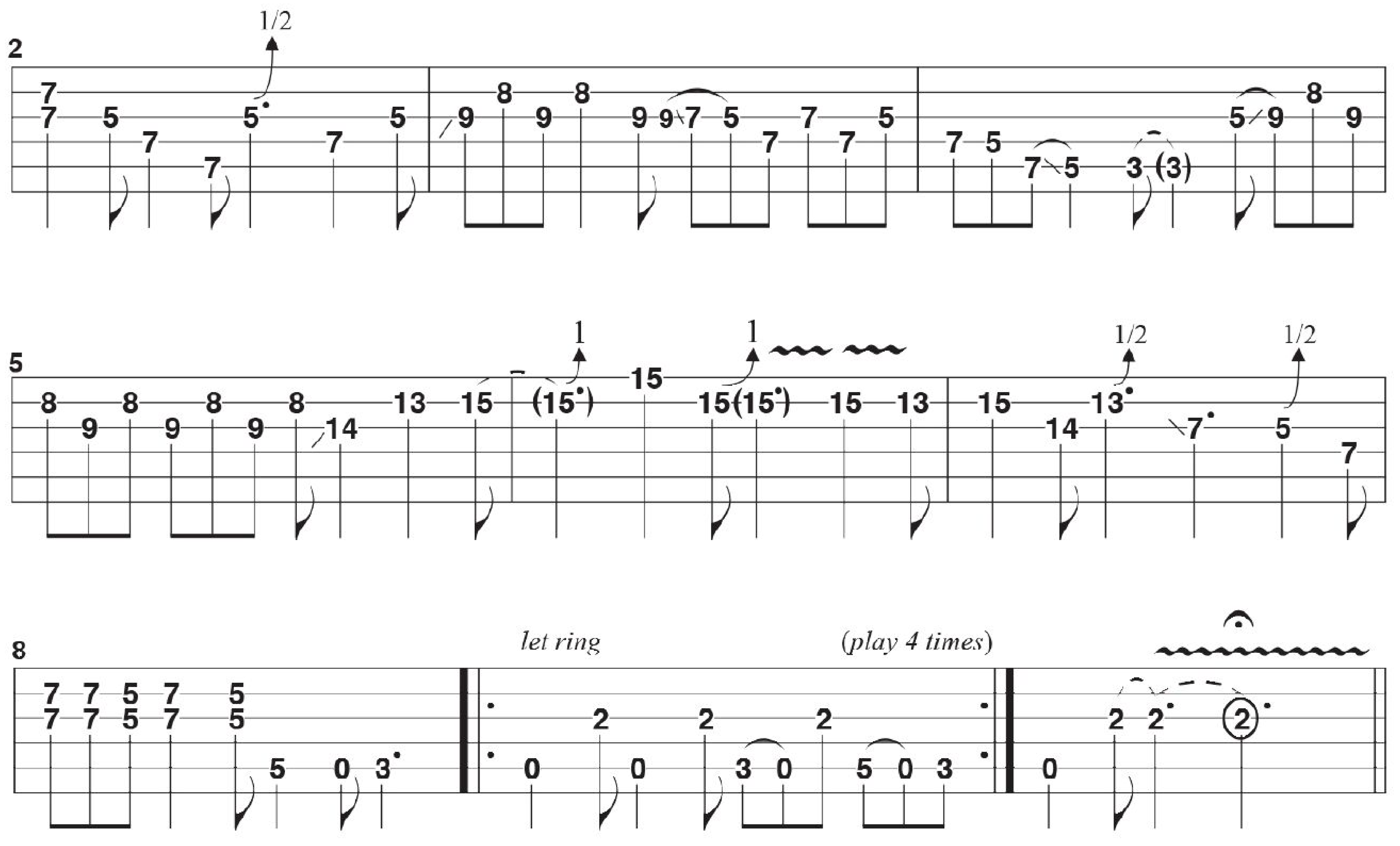
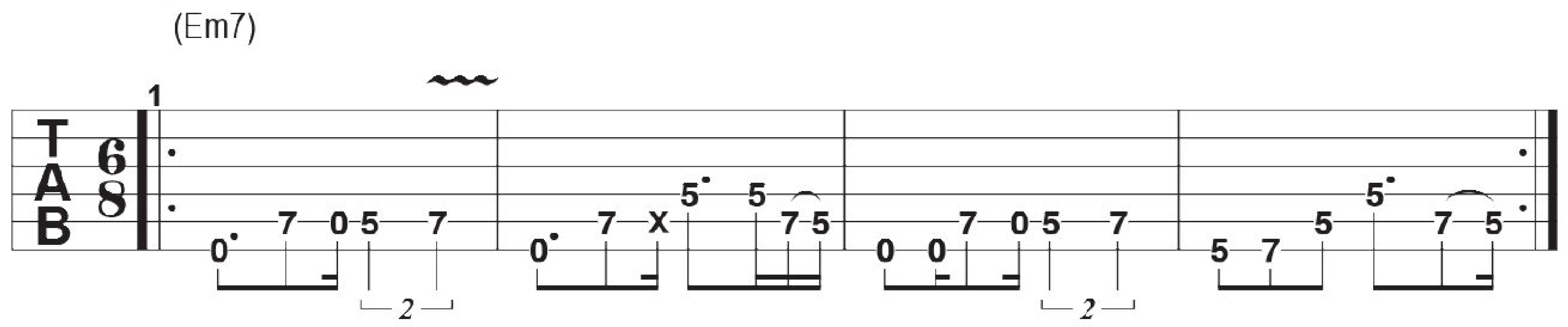


FIG. 10 AYRON JONES



Billy Gibbons' riffing on ZZ Top's "La Grange." With the A chord held firmly at the 2nd fret, this part emulates the sound of open A tuning, à la John Lee Hooker, as a low-note figure is added and articulated with pull-offs.

FIGURE 9 presents a solo played in Shaw Taylor's style, kicking off with two-string bends sounded by barring the 3rd finger across the G and B strings. Two-string bend-and-release licks like these were pioneered by T-Bone Walker and Chuck Berry, who were both primary influences on Hendrix.

In bars 3 and 6, the phrase slides up to E, on the G string's 9th fret, and then alternates between E and the G note above it, on the 8th fret of the B string, in repeating groups of eighth notes. This two-note shape then shifts up to 13th position, with phrases based on A minor pentatonic (A, C, D, E, G). Bar 7 features a fast slide down the G string back to 5th position. Quick positional shifts like these are a hallmark of Hendrix's playing style, as well as those of Gibbons and Stevie Ray Vaughan.

AYRON JONES

Seattle's Ayron Jones blends his heavy blues-rock style with elements of grunge, soul and hip-hop. On "Emily," he leans in heavily with a Hendrix vibe, performing in a guitar-bass-drums power trio.

FIGURE 10 offers a heavy primary riff played in the key E and in $\frac{6}{8}$ meter. Hendrix leaned on open low E-based riffs for many of his most well-known songs, such as "Purple Haze" and "Stone Free." This four-bar riff gives way to sliding two-note chordal figures fretted on the A and D strings, which also include the open G string.

FIGURE 11 is a solo played in Jones' style. We start off in the 12th-position box shape for E minor pentatonic (E, G, A, B, D) with an oblique bend; a note on the G string is bent while a note on the B string is held stationary. In bar 3, the phrase shifts quickly down and then back up the G string. Hendrix employed these techniques in many of his solos, such as those in "Machine Gun" and "Spanish Castle Magic." The lick in bar 6 is a fast flurry of notes, reflecting a technique often referred to as "cramming." The solo then wraps up with melodic lines that sit firmly in the heavy $\frac{6}{8}$ groove.

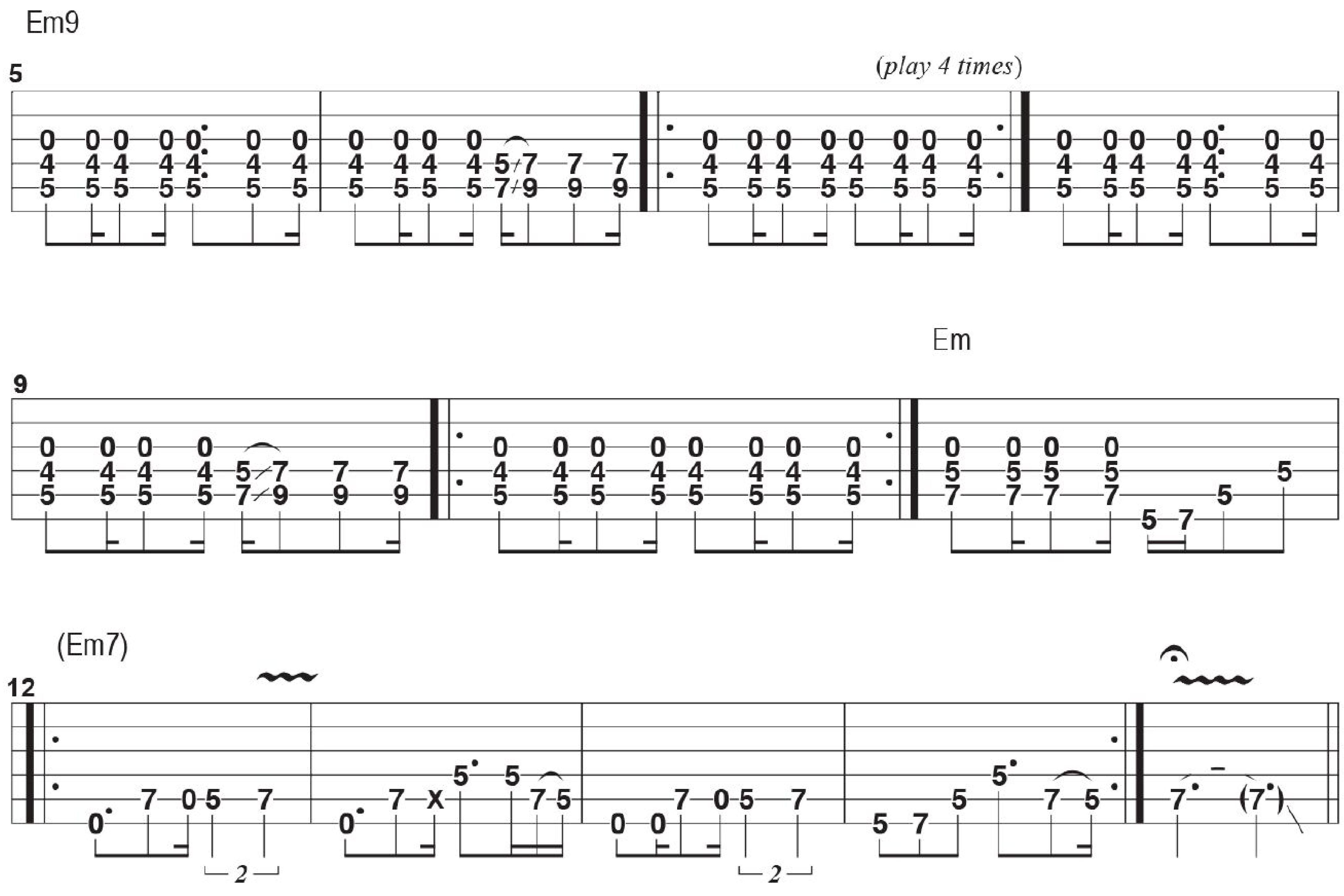
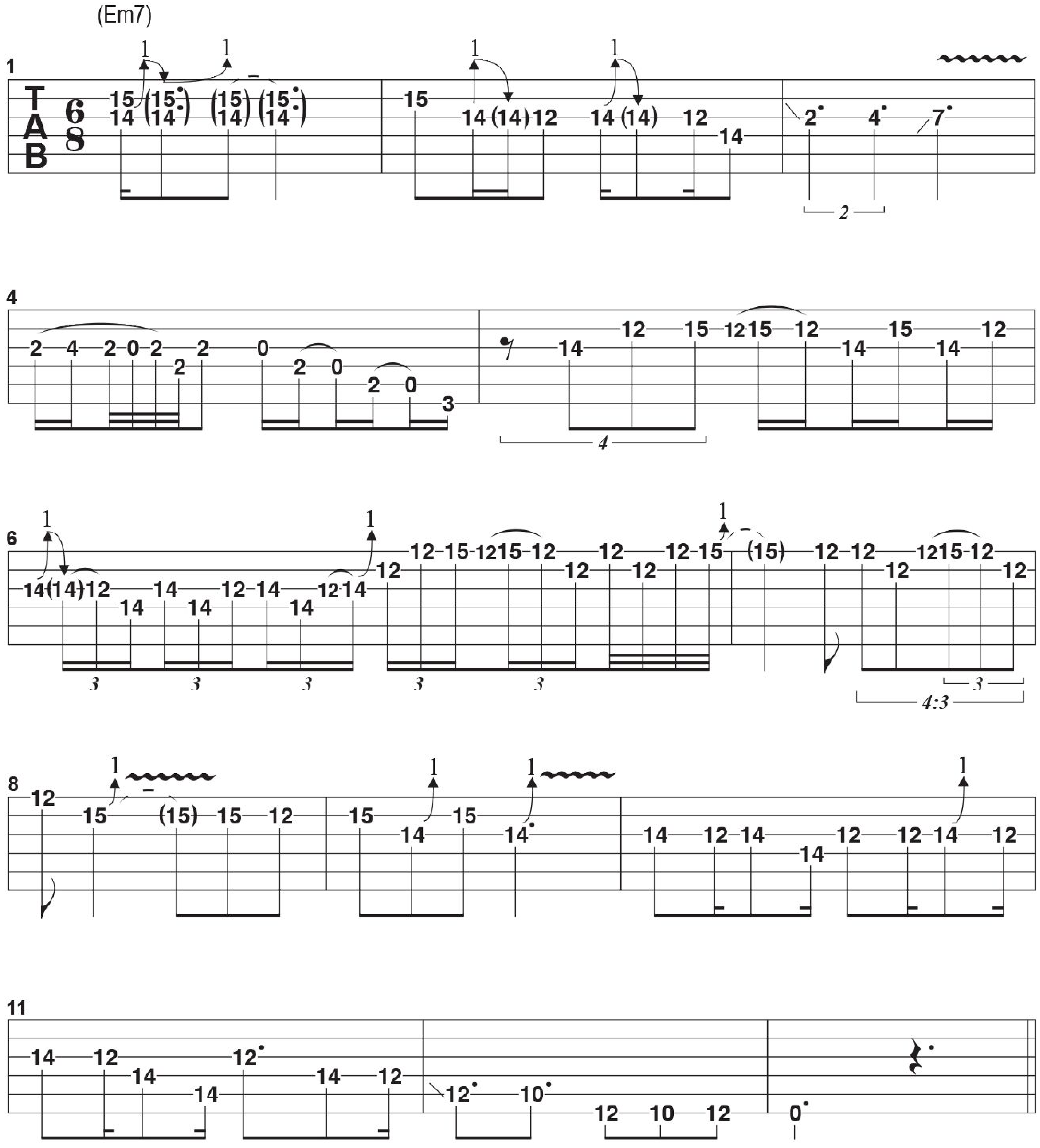


FIG. 11



MAARTEN DE BOER/CONTOUR BY GETTY IMAGES

TELL ME STRAIGHT

Keith Richards, the legendary Master of the Telecaster, talks about the magic and loss of ***Hackney Diamonds,*** the sparkling new Rolling Stones album.

BY BRAD TOLINSKI

KEITH RICHARDS ONCE humorously quipped, "Guitar is easy — all it takes is five fingers, six strings and one asshole."

Yes, easy perhaps, but few have wielded the instrument with as much imagination, grit and panache as the legendary Rolling Stone himself. Over the past six decades, the guitarist has unleashed a torrent of timeless riffs, gracing hits like "Jumpin' Jack Flash," "Satisfaction," "Honky Tonk Women," "Start Me Up," "Can't You Hear Me Knockin'" and "Happy."

And now, brace yourselves for a dozen more hot rocks. At the venerable age of 79, Richards, accompanied by his eternally youthful crew, the Rolling Stones, has put the final touches on their 26th U.S. studio album. Lord knows, it's been a long time comin'. Nearly eight years have passed since the release of their 2016 blues covers album, *Blue and Lonesome*, and twice that time since their last batch of original songs, 2005's *A Bigger Bang*.

The good news is the wait's been worth it. Packed with killer tunes and those trademark Keef guitar hooks, *Hackney Diamonds* (Geffen) stands tall among their very best work. Bold, textured and unapologetically ambitious it recalls classics like *Let It Bleed* (1969) and *Exile on Main St*. (1972). The album also features guest appearances by some of rock's greatest luminaries, including Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder, Elton John, Lady Gaga and even original Stones bassist Bill Wyman, who hasn't recorded with the band for almost 30 years.

Guest cameos often distract more than they add, but the Stones have artfully deployed these music icons in surprisingly subtle and complementary ways. Wonder and Lady Gaga, for example, add just the

"I'M NOT SURE WHETHER WE NEEDED TO PROVE ANYTHING. I MEAN, MAYBE WE NEEDED TO PROVE WE COULD STILL MAKE A RECORD."

KEVIN MAZUR VIA GETTY IMAGES (2023)

right touch of soulful elegance to the celestial gospel rave-up "Sweet Sounds of Heaven," while Elton discreetly provides some tastefully rollicking piano on two tracks. Perhaps the biggest surprise is McCartney's contribution. Beatle Paul, known primarily for his timeless love songs and gift for melody, goes against type and unleashes the mother of all snarling fuzz-bass lines on "Bite My Head Off," an exhilarating punk rocker that tears the roof off the joint.

"To be honest, if Paul had come another day, he'd probably have been on a different song," Richards says with a laugh. "It wasn't calculated. It just happened to be the flavor of the month that day."

The guitarist maintains that the album's creation was "fun, quick and effortless," yet he admits it wasn't without a few tears. *Hackney Diamonds* marks the band's first production since the passing of Charlie Watts, one of rock's preeminent drummers, if not the unrivaled champion, who died on August 24, 2021, at the age of 80. The loss of the band's inimitable "engine room" was a bitter pill to swallow.

"Charlie was such a part of me and what I played, I haven't quite come to terms with it yet," Richards says somberly.

Fortunately, the band was able to find a suitable replacement for Watts with percussionist Steve Jordan, who has played with Richards in the guitarist's various side projects over the past couple decades. And as Keith explains in the following conversation, it was Watts himself who crowned Jordan as his heir apparent.

Despite the loss of their longtime drummer, the Rolling Stones — Richards, singer Mick Jagger and guitarist Ronnie Wood — are in top form on the album, with some credit going to their young 32-year-old producer, ironically named Andrew Watt. While it may surprise some that the Stones would put their legacy in the hands of someone a fraction of their age, Watt has built a solid reputation by crafting excellent albums for several top-shelf veteran rockers and rappers, like Ozzy Osbourne, Eddie Vedder, Iggy Pop, Post Malone and Juice Wrld, all of which earned him the prestigious 2021 Grammy Award for Producer of the Year.

But earning a Grammy is one thing, and gaining the respect of Richards, who undoubtedly has seen it all (and then some) is a whole 'nother matter. The guitarist, however, makes it abundantly clear that he enjoyed working with the producer and credits him with getting the album done in a month or two, something that he considers almost miraculous.

I was overwhelmed by how diverse and fresh the whole album sounds. I understand it had a lengthy evolution.

Yeah, it took a while to get it going, but when we finished touring last year, Mick and I decided, Let's just blitz a record, man, because we were being too relaxed about it and not really putting it together. We sort of made a project of it and said, Let's get a guy that can push this thing with us. Mick found Andy Watt, and I've got to say, it was quite an experience working with him. He's very young, very enthusiastic, and we worked very fast on it once it got going.

Initially, I was almost a little skeptical that we would ever finish another album, because it's been so long since we put new stuff out. For a minute, I was sorta waiting to see what would happen.

Sometimes it's good to have a deadline.

Yeah, exactly. That was Mick's opinion. I said, "If you've got enough material, let's go for it." That's how it happened.

SERGIONE INFUSO/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES (2022); MICHAEL HURCOMB/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES (2015)

It's been 15 years since your last batch of original songs with the Stones, and I was wondering, as an artist, did you feel like you had something to prove?
I'm not sure whether we needed to prove anything. I mean, maybe we needed to prove we could still make a record. But Mick had been building up material, and once I heard it, I said, "Well, we need to do a little bit of movement here or work on the bridge and stuff." But a lot of the time, his ideas were together, so once we got in the studio, it wasn't that difficult. It was also incredible to work with Steve Jordan for the first time on a Stones record. It was like presenting a "Stones now" kind of thing. [*laughs*]

The first two songs, "Angry" and "Get Close," begin with great kick-ass rhythm guitar hooks. Does your songwriting process usually begin with finding a great guitar riff?
Kind of, although from my point of view, there's no fixed formula for writing a song. I feel more like I'm an antenna than a creator, particularly because, to me, songs seem to come from somewhere out there in the cosmos. If I sit down with a guitar or a piano and just start playing, eventually a song comes. It's a bad day when it doesn't. [*laughs*] Most of the time I feel like I'm just receiving inspiration from everything that has gone on before me, and then put it through my own point of view, and then sort of pass it on. I almost don't feel any sense of ownership.

Most guitar players are pretty good at noodling around. The hope is that you stumble onto something interesting.
Yeah, exactly. Right. I mean, sometimes an idea just finds you. Regardless, guitar playing is just a fantastic form of relaxation. Everybody should have one! [*laughs*]

I know this is very personal, but how did Charlie Watts' death affect you?
All I can say is that I loved the man dearly, and I miss him. I still have conversations with the fucker. [*laughs*]

ABOVE: Ronnie Wood, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards perform at Stadio San Siro, Milan, Italy, June 21, 2022.

TOP: Onstage at the Festival D'ete De Quebec, Quebec City, July 15, 2015.

> **"THE STONES ARE STILL THE STONES IN THEIR OWN WAY. I MEAN, NO BAND HAS LASTED THIS LONG, SO THERE IS REALLY NOTHING TO COMPARE IT WITH"**

You worked with drummer Steve Jordan for quite a few years on your side projects with the X-Pensive Winos. That must've made the transition a bit easier.
When I started putting the Winos together, it was Charlie Watts who told me, "If you're going to work with anybody else, Steve Jordan is your man." So Steve's been wearing that mantle for a while, and we all knew him, so in that way the transfer wasn't that difficult. But, still, it's impossible to put into words what Charlie meant to us. He was just a fantastic friend and so much more.

I know that Charlie was a huge fan of drummers. He was a real scholar. For Steve to get his endorsement is significant.
Absolutely. And you're right about Charlie, he was totally invested in the great drummers of the '30s and '40s, like Max Roach and Art Blakey. Swing drummers were his joy. He was a historian on them. Yeah. He knew just about everything about 'em. The history side of it was very important for Charlie.

What did he appreciate about Steve's playing?
I think he recognized him as a soulmate. Steve had been listening to Charlie since he was a kid and knew his playing from the ground up. He can do an incredible imitation of Charlie's drumming, and I think Charlie got a kick out of that.

It's not easy to catch the nuances of Charlie's feel.
No, it isn't. No. He had his own little ways of playing and some of those secrets he's taken with him.

Charlie appears on two tracks on *Hackney Diamonds*: "Mess It Up" and "Live by the Sword." The album credits list that his performances were produced by Don Was, who produced your previous two albums, so I imagine the genesis of those songs came from earlier sessions.
We had just started working on those tracks a few years ago, before Covid shut everything down. We left Charlie's tracks as they were and re-did the vocals and everything else with Andy Watt. As soon as you hear that snare, you know it's him.

Did Charlie have much input on how your songs were constructed?
No, I wouldn't say that. He would listen to whatever we brought in and made his own decisions about how to play it, but Charlie thought that a song was to be played, and I believe he didn't think that songwriting was a part of his job. He just liked songs, and if he liked them, he'd play 'em.

You must have had an incredible connection with him, because I know a lot of guitar players play to the drummer.
Yeah, especially rock and roll players, if the drummer is the right kind of drummer. Charlie could swing and he could roll it a little more than most straight rock drummers. Charlie always added a jazz tinge to everything he played, so there was always that slightly different feel about the Stones' music.

There are a lot of what I call "full-circle moments" on the record, moments that take you back to the band's origins. One is having Bill Wyman play in the studio with the band after a 30-year absence. How did that come about?
Well, Bill and I have regularly stayed in touch through the years. He quite often sends me bits of information over the phone. I always see him when I go to England. In fact, I'm going to London next week, and I have no doubt that I'll see him then. I'm not sure if he sees a lot of Mick and Ronnie, but I always make a sure point of getting to him.We just thought it would be cool to have him on one of the last tracks with Charlie. A reunion of sorts.

Unfortunately, we weren't in the same room together to record that, because we all just overdubbed to Charlie's original track. But we're all still good friends. The Stones are still the Stones in their own way. I mean, no band has lasted this long, so there is really nothing to compare it with. We see each other when we can. It's not like we forgot each other just because somebody leaves the band.

How did Paul McCartney enter the picture? I think it shocked everyone when it was announced that he was going to be on a Rolling Stones track.
He had been doing some work with Andrew Watt as well, and happened to be around and

SERGIONE INFUSO/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

Paul McCartney's friendship with the Rolling Stones dates back to 1962. Keith and Macca (at top) share a moment at the 2000 VH1 Vogue Fashion Awards After Party in New York City. Richards and Brian Jones chat with McCartney (above) in 1964 at the premiere party for the Fabs' movie *A Hard Day's Night.*

OPPOSITE: *Hackney Diamonds* guest star Stevie Wonder performs with the Rolling Stones at New York CIty's Madison Square Garden in 1972.

dropped by. I don't even think he intended to play bass on a track, but once we he was there, I just said, "Come on, you're in. You ain't leaving until you play." [*laughs*]

Famously, John [*Lennon*] and Paul wrote "I Wanna Be Your Man" for the Stones, and it became your first hit in England.

The Beatles and the Stones have been basically joined together at the hips from the beginning. We were totally different bands, but we knew each other well. I think we first met them in the fall of '62, when they came down to see us play in London, and from there, every now and again, we'd get in touch. Later, John and Paul sang on "We Love You" and on "Dandelion." We've always sort of been in touch. Ronnie and I used to hang with George Harrison quite a bit in the 1970s, so there's always been an open door between the Beatles and the Stones. We were the only ones that knew what it's like to have that extreme kind of fame in the 1960s, so that created a bond.

Another "full circle moment" comes at the end of the record, when you and Mick perform a terrific, intimate duet of Muddy Waters' "Rolling Stones Blues," the song that gave your band its name.

That was Andrew's idea. He turned up at the studio with a 1920s Gibson L-4 acoustic and asked us to do that Muddy thing. Ironically, I'd never played that song before, but the guitar was beautiful, and we did it in a couple of takes. The guitar that he laid on me was just the perfect sort of instrument for the job. It was perfectly archaic and, I must confess, pretty difficult to play. [*laughs*]

What does the music of Muddy Waters mean to you?

It's the foundation. The blues was what I was chasing as a young man, and at one point I was going to stay there, and it was only rock and roll that got me out. [*laughs*] But to me, if you're a rock musician, it's essential to have a grounding in the blues, and it doesn't get much better than Muddy Waters.

When I heard that song at the end of the album, I thought it would be a perfect way

KMAZUR/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES (2000); DAILY MIRROR/DAILY MIRROR/MIRRORPIX VIA GETTY IMAGES (1964)

"THERE'S ALWAYS BEEN AN OPEN DOOR BETWEEN THE BEATLES AND THE STONES. WE WERE THE ONLY ONES THAT KNEW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HAVE THAT EXTREME KIND OF FAME IN THE 1960S"

to end your recording legacy. You know, "Here's where it started, and this is the way it's ending." Were you concerned that people might interpret it that way?
Man, I've never even come close to thinking of wrapping up the Rolling Stones' story, so my answer to that is "Absolutely not." It was just a cool way of wrapping up this album, and the story so far. We plan to keep working. I know we're going to work next year.

Making music is still quite exciting for me. I hadn't realized how long it was since our last album, I think eight years ago or something. It's funny how time flies, man, but I'm enjoying the process of releasing a new record and seeing what happens.

Since the 1970s, the Stones have been a fluid entity. You had all these adjunct members, like pianist Nicky Hopkins, guitarist Mick Taylor or saxophonist Bobby Keys, that came and went. Do you feel like that was an essential element in keeping the band interesting and evolving?
There's some truth to that, but it wasn't intentional. It was just, "Hey, we need a piano, we need a sax." And the best guys just kept hanging around. [*laughs*] But you're absolutely right: All of that extra talent and new blood has always helped the Rolling Stones. Ian Stewart was our first piano player, and in many ways the Rolling Stones were his band. But I mean, God, man, it's been 60 years. You're going to go through a few changes, right? [*laughs*]

It's super smart to bounce ideas off new musicians, but most bands seem to believe that it "dilutes the brand."
Yeah, I don't understand that way of thinking. We had Stevie Wonder and Lady Gaga bounce in too, which was a surprise, and it came out cool.

I was a little nervous when I heard Lady Gaga was going to be on a track. I didn't know where that was going to go, but I have to say, "Sweet Sounds of Heaven" is one of my favorite songs on the record.
Right, I don't blame you. I understand what you were thinking, but she's one of the Stones now.

Her gospel singing on the song is pretty righteous.
She's a talented piece of work. It also helped to have Stevie Wonder playing keyboards. Having the both of them in the same room was pretty interesting.

"Sweet Sounds of Heaven" is built around a textbook gospel chord progression. Did that come from you?
The sound and feel of gospel runs through almost everything we've ever done, but Mick and I never actually pinned it down in such a specific way. "Sweet Sounds of Heaven" started as more an Otis Redding–style soul music thing and evolved from there. Soul music and gospel are just a part of us, and at the right time it suddenly comes out.

There was no sort of premeditated decision to do a gospel thing. Mick just had these lyrics, and then there it was. We worked it out while we were all in a room together, so it felt very organic. I don't think that song could've come together any other way. I was wondering about the false ending at the time. I didn't get it. But then I got into the flow of it, and I think it really works.

I'm a huge Stevie Wonder fan, and we haven't heard much from him in recent years. He sounds great on the track and seems like he has so much to offer.
We used to work with Stevie on the road quite a lot in the 1970s, so we've known each

BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES

"MICK AND I DECIDED, LET'S JUST BLITZ A RECORD, MAN, BECAUSE WE WERE BEING TOO RELAXED ABOUT IT AND NOT REALLY PUTTING IT TOGETHER"

other for quite a while. But Stevie does what he wants to do, and when he wants to do it, he does it.

As you've noted, the album is produced by Andrew Watt. He's much younger than you guys. I think he was only 15 years old when you came out with your last batch of originals. What did he bring to the table?
He brought exactly what we wanted: energy and a fresh mind. He knew our stuff back to front, and I think he had a ball making the Stones' record. It was fun to make, very quick, compared to a lot of our records. We did most of it in a month or two. I enjoyed working with him.

Well, you've got kids, so I imagine that you can respect the value of a younger perspective, too.
Right. It rubs off.

If your ears are open, sometimes you can learn some new things.
Right. And it's all about listening. It's music. There's something there.

One of the more striking elements on the record are Mick's vocals. His approach is more direct and less stylized than in recent years. It's almost a return to way he sang in the 1960s with producer Andrew Loog Oldham.
Oh, that's interesting. Maybe it's because both producers are named Andrew! [*laughs*] But you make a point. Mick worked hard, and I think he put more consideration into each song rather than just doing it. It was my observation that he thought a lot more about the vocals than usual.

They felt more honest.
Yeah, I get your picture. I had pretty much the same impression as you on that, but I really put it down to the fact that Andrew and Mick worked very tightly on each track.

On "Tell Me Straight," your lead vocal also has a new vitality. You're really belting it out.
People have been telling me I sound stronger after I stopped smoking cigarettes in 2019. When we went out on the road a couple years ago, the sound guys started making comments. They were like, "Man, your voice...what's happening?" Since then, singing has felt different, and I'm enjoying it.

You sound like a kid on that song!
There's probably an age when you start to go into reverse. And I'm probably in it. [*laughs*]

"Tell Me Straight" feels like a life philosophy, sort of a song you were born to write: part mythic, part hardcore truth.
Oh, cool. It came kind of like that. Once it was on the roller, these chords appeared and then the rest of it seemed to fall into place around it. I knew it was getting pretty good because Mick tried to steal it! I had to say, "Uh-uh buddy. I'm doin' this one." [*laughs*]

There are a lot of guitars on the album. Lots of texture.
My five-string Tele is on a good half of the tracks, but there's also a lot of the Gibson. That's not unusual. I've never just used one guitar in the studio, but I've been getting know this '59 Gibson ES-355 lately, and I really enjoy playing it.

In the early days of the Stones, you leaned pretty hard into Gibson Les Pauls, and then there was a bit of a shift. Do you remember what drew you into using a Fender Telecaster?
I don't know how I started moving in that direction. I think it was something to do with the way I was playing, and a Telecaster made it easier. But I've always loved Gibson guitars, and, I mean, there's a lot of overdubs on everything here, so as usual, with every Rolling Stones record, there's a great mixture of different guitars.

Fender and Gibson guitars make a great time-honored pairing.
And then of course, it depends what amp you're going to use. Yeah, it's a big difference. I used Fender Twins most of the time, with the occasional Fender Champ when I was looking for something different.

I'd like to ask you a few questions about the appeal of playing your five-string Tele tuned to open G [*G, D, G, B, D*]. Is it because it automatically creates a great blend with a standard six-string?
Yeah, that's part of it. That's the sound of a Stones record: a five-string with a six-string

SERGIONE INFUSO/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

"I don't know how I started moving in that direction," Keith says of adopting the Fender Telecaster, the guitar with which he is most closely identified. "I think it was something to do with the way I was playing, and a Telecaster made it easier."

J. ROSE

on top, and Ronnie. It always creates a beautiful blend. A great example is how it sounds with Ronnie's Dobro on [the *Hackney Diamonds* track] "Dreamy Skies." You always have to play around with the amps a bit, but guitars are amazing things. You can make an orchestra out of them with just a simple blend.

Your band arrangements tend to be a little dense. In addition to a few guitars, there are often some keyboards, horns and backing vocals. Do you find that by eliminating your low sixth string, it opens the mix up so other instruments can be properly heard?

Yes! It's always been the mystery to me why so much space opens up for other instruments by taking off the bottom string. You're right, but I can't really put my finger on a reason why, but somehow that one extra note disappearing allows for all kinds of other instruments to come through. It's just one of those things, I guess.

What was it like working with Ronnie on this record? Do you guys spend a lot of time figuring out those guitar blends?

Truth is, it's almost never complicated. We just fit together. I mean, it's like knit one, purl two, and it's not something we need to think or talk about too much. If we thought about it, it would probably become too studied. It either works or it doesn't. And if it doesn't, then we try it another way.

Would you mind just talking about a couple of older songs? When people ask me about the importance of rhythm guitar, I always direct them to "Can't You Hear Me Knocking," from your *Sticky Fingers* album. Everyone focuses on the extended solos by Bobby Keys and Mick Taylor, but what kills me are all the different rhythm parts that you use to frame those solos.

If I can remember rightly, I was really focused on working on the tuning thing and different ways of playing the guitar. I think it was at the time when I was really just balancing between playing with open tunings and regular tunings, so all kinds of different things were sort of coming out. That was with [*producer*] Jimmy Miller, who loved to play around with stuff like that. The track really grew while we were playing it. It was a good day.

Okay, here's another one: "Love in Vain" [from 1969's *Let It Bleed*], your re-invention of the classic Robert Johnson blues song. No one can play like Robert — and you were probably smart to not even try — but your arrangement is equally terrific.

I've always loved that tune, and I always thought there was something about the melody that suggested it wasn't just a blues song. I heard a bit of country or folk in it, so I attacked it from that perspective. I remember thinking I wasn't going to try to play it like Robert, and I wasn't even going to play it like a blues. I'm going to pick out the notes and take it in a different direction. It just so happened that both Mick Jagger and Mick Taylor cottoned on to the idea, and we found ourselves doing it a new way.

One last thing. Another great musician passed this year. What did you think of Jeff Beck? And is there any truth that he was being considered for the Stones after Mick Taylor left?

Jeff? No, we felt that Jeff had his own furrow to plow and that he was not a team man. He was a soloist to the max. He was such an individualist. It wouldn't have worked with the Stones at all. We're all about teamwork.

But don't get me wrong, he was a tremendous player. The odd times we got together, I was always amazed by the stuff that he did with his tremolo bar. He was one of the best, man, and he's going to be missed.

So, do you think your next album will be done...

...sometime before the next century? Yeah, I do hope so. [*laughs*] And I suppose given the normal pattern of things, we'll probably be on the road next year. And after that, we'll see.

STAR TURN

Kelley Deal was a drummer who wanted to play lead guitar. She got her chance on the Breeders' 1993 Platinum-seller, Last Splash. Thirty years on, she reflects on making an alt-rock masterpiece.

BY TOM BEAUJOUR

WHEN PIXIES BASSIST Kim Deal asked her twin sister, Kelley, to join the Breeders, a side project that she had started with Tanya Donelly of Throwing Muses in 1989, Kelley was not particularly surprised. In fact, it was a reunion that was long overdue. "We grew up playing music together, so it seemed completely normal to me and her that she would have me involved," Kelley says. "Drums were my first instrument, and Kim and Charles [Pixies frontman Black Francis] actually split the ticket for me to go to Boston to be the drummer for the Pixies. I wasn't an active drummer at that time, and when I heard the songs I was like, I can't do that gig. They need a real drummer."

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Kim had also reached out to Kelley when the Breeders made the recordings for their first album, 1990's Pod, with producer Steve Albini. "She asked me if I wanted to go, but I couldn't get off of work for it. I think I was working for Litton Computer Services, which is a defense contractor in Dayton, Ohio, where we're from." When the Breeders were preparing to record 1992's Safari EP, Kim once again approached Kelley about joining her in the band, and Kelley this time made the jump. "Kim asked me what I wanted to play; the choice was open. I didn't say guitar, I didn't say rhythm guitar, I didn't say bass guitar. I said lead guitar. I wanted to play the star."

The Breeders would tour extensively in 1992, including a slot at that year's Reading Festival and a run supporting Nirvana, and would enter the studio in early 1993 to make their second full- length, Last Splash, with many of the songs already road tested and demoed. Still, Kelley was relatively new to the guitar and to the exigencies of the recording process. "When we recorded Last Splash, every single person there — with the exception of our drummer, Jim Macpherson — could play guitar better than I could. At any time, they could have taken the instrument and been like, 'Okay, that's fine. All right. Okay. Let me just do it real quick.' They could have made the decision, 'We don't have the time or the patience.' But they never did. And it makes all the difference, because then you have ownership over your parts and the record, and you feel proud about stuff."

Released in August 1993, Last Splash would go Platinum on the strength of its hit single, "Cannonball," but it is anything but a conventionally commercial album. An exercise in contrasts — where catchy riffs and sweet melodies are jostled by squealing guitars and other disquieting noises — it's the rare album that somehow manages to sound as satisfying as it does strange. "It's a really lovely art piece, and it seems like a complete thought," Kelley says. "And whenever I think about the record, I like to consider us an art band, because we do have weird sounds and weird moments and lots of empty spaces. A lot of the time, what you don't play is more important than what you actually do play."

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the album's release, the Breeders have released a new deluxe edition of Last Splash and have been performing the record live in its entirety. Guitar Player caught up with Kelley Deal on the Breeders' bus, just as the celebratory tour was getting underway.

Beyond it being very cool, was there a musical rationale behind your request to play lead guitar in the Breeders?

Yeah, Jimmy Page in [the 1976 concert film] The Song Remains the Same. That blew my little prosaic mind of what a lead guitar could be. It was soundscape — an art project.

Kelley (left) and Kim Deal perform with the Breeders on MTV Live and Loud, opening for Nirvana, December 1993.

JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC

The Breeders circa 1993. (from left) Kim and Kelley Deal, drummer Jim Macpherson and bassist Josephine Wiggs.

KEVIN WESTENBERG

"I DIDN'T SAY RHYTHM GUITAR, I DIDN'T SAY BASS GUITAR. I SAID LEAD GUITAR. I WANTED TO PLAY THE STAR"

Once you decided to be the lead guitarist, did you then develop a practice regimen?
Did I sit down and learn how to play scales? No. Had I done that, I would've obviously been a more proficient guitarist, but I would also have been a different guitarist. Even today, with what little I do know, I have to remind myself — especially on songs that we recorded back then, like "Hag" — not to do the little string-wiggle vibrato. I have to just let that note lay there, and back off of it and keep that vulnerability and sincerity. It's got to just be those notes, and then leave. My narrator is not a jammer.

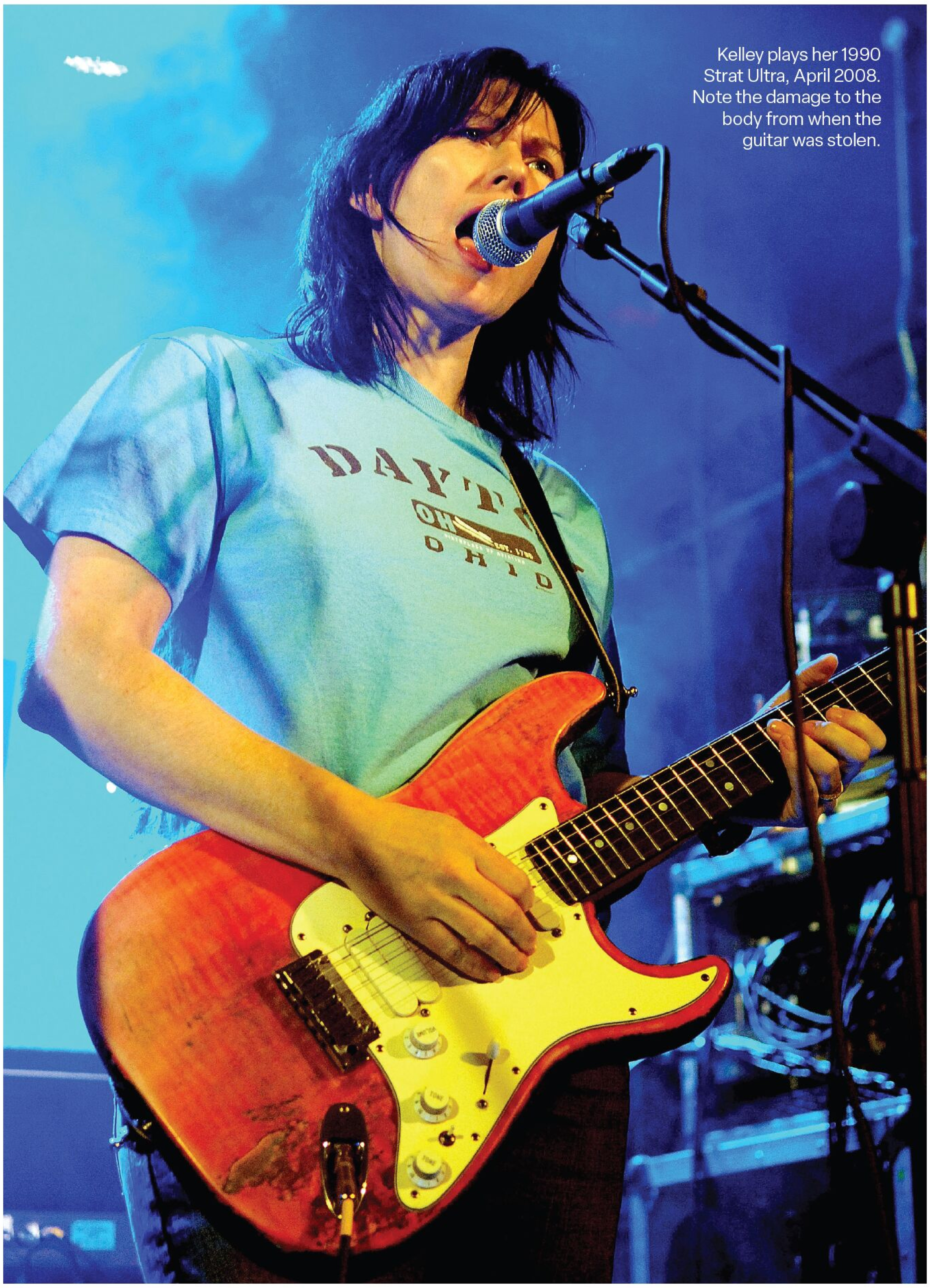
The guitar is so physical and muscle-memory–based that once you develop patterns, it can completely limit you. Your hand is playing you.
You've got to really work at getting out of that. Even today, when I write or do anything for my other band, R. Ring, my partner in that, Mike Montgomery, often talks about "the claw" — the hand shape you typically use on the neck. It's the same claw that you always make. I'll just change the tuning on my guitar so that when I do my claw, it produces different notes and sounds than if it was tuned in standard. Then it's like, "Oh see, that's not something I would typically play."

In addition to Page, were you inspired by any other more alternative guitarists?
Andy Gill from Gang of Four, for sure, because that was another revelation for me. It was the anti-blues. It's so easy to go into blues-based rock or blues-based lead playing, and I really try not to. And the tone was so different. It was so abrasive and ugly.

"Cannonball" was a huge hit song for the band. Was there any sense while you were recording the album that it had a special commercial potential?
We knew it was cool and stuff, but I don't know if many people remember that at that time, on alternative radio or college radio, that was not what was being played. It was jangly stuff, like R.E.M. This was a very noisy, noisy track, and the arrangement is weird. Nothing repeats the same amount. The guitars stop, the drums stop. The lead guitar does not shred or do anything. It just does that hook. And the main guitar is a distorted acoustic. It was just a very weird track.

The sliding guitar hook on "Cannonball" must be challenging to play evenly and smoothly.
We actually had to tape some of the strings that I wasn't using. To get that part loud enough and compressed enough, you can't have any string dangle. It's a dry, warm tone — a nice jazzy, George Benson kind of thing — and I played on the fifth fret of the D and the G. When we play the song live, I use a boost on that part, and I turn the reverb up a little. But that's a tough one to get creamy enough versus just loud.

When listening closely to Last Splash, particularly on headphones, it's noticeable how much attention is given to the "noise" elements of the record. They're perfectly timed for dramatic effect. They pan, they mute. it's really elaborate.
Every single note, squiggle and squeal has been curated for the listener. And I think what's so great about the record is that it doesn't sound like that. So much sounds accidental, and of course, some things were, but they were accidental and then left in. There was a lot of accidental stuff that was not left in too. But the end result is that it doesn't sound overworked; it sounds natural. It sounds like a bunch of people got in the



Kelley plays her 1990 Strat Ultra, April 2008. Note the damage to the body from when the guitar was stolen.

studio and just did it. And that's not it at all.

For the end of "New Year," for example, I went out into the live room and just made all kinds of sounds — reverb, squeals, whines, moans — and then we put that to quarter-inch tape. We fed the tape into the machine and then meticulously went through it: You hear a squeal, and then you mark it, and you write squeal. And then there's a nice bit of feedback, and you write feedback. You keep doing that, and you isolate these sounds that are interesting.Then we unloaded the tape, cut it, and made little piles of blips, feedback, whatever. Our co-producer, Mark Freegard, taped all that together, some of it backward, and that's the piece that you hear.

What were the main guitars on the record?
Mainly my Strat Ultra, and then I used Kim's goldtop Les Paul, because I didn't have a Les Paul at that time. Kim also had her Strat and her acoustics. A lot of songs have acoustic run through distortion as the main rhythm guitar. We really didn't have a deep pocket of guitars, but our engineer, Andy Taub at Coast in San Francisco, knew Chuck Prophet from [the Tucson-based alt-country/neopsychedelic group] Green on Red, and he brought over a ton of equipment, like the mandolin I play on "Drivin' on 9." That really helped us.

And as far as amps and pedals go?
Kim and I used the Marshall JCM900s that we still use to this day. I love those so much. Every time I play something else, I just want to get back to my JCM900. I'm so happy about it because of the channel switching. It's a workhorse, and it's a beautiful pedal platform. I also had this great Montgomery Ward amp that I found in a pawn shop. It has great tremolo on it, and that's what you're hearing any time there's that effect on the record, like on Kim's vocal on "Mad Lucas." I had to go out and get a tremolo pedal after making the record to replicate those sounds. As far as pedals go, I think I just had an orange Boss DS-1, a digital delay and maybe my Ibanez Tube King. The reverb on my JCM900 still worked back then, so I didn't need a pedal for that.

Your Strat Ultra was stolen. What happened?
That was my very first electric guitar. It was a gift from my sister for Christmas, and I just about died when it was stolen. We played a show in 1991, in Olympia, Washington, and I sat my guitar down on the stand and I turned my body to walk off. And before anybody knew it, a kid, who was maybe 11 or 12 years old, jumped onstage, grabbed my guitar, and went out the back. Some members of Nirvana and their crew were there and they asked for the serial number of the guitar and said, "We'll to keep our eyes open." [Although many online sources say Deal's Strat Ultra is a 1992 model, it appears to be of 1990 vintage, with serial number N988911. While N9 serial numbers designate a Fender guitar of 1999 manufacture, the company inadvertently affixed a number of those preprinted decals to some 1990 models.]

About a year later, I got a phone call from one of the crew people. The guitar had surfaced in a store and the serial number had been on a list, so they were notified. I sent the store some money and they shipped my guitar back. The finish was stripped, and it was done with a hammer and a chisel, and then this weird green automotive paint was on some of it. But the serial number was perfect! I never got the guitar fixed because it had gone through a trauma. And I needed to respect that.

"IT'S GOT TO JUST BE THOSE NOTES, AND THEN LEAVE. MY NARRATOR IS NOT A JAMMER"

SHIRLAINE FORREST/WIREIMAGE

FEATURING ADAM MELCHOR WITH THE HIGHWAY SERIES DREADNOUGHT IN SPRUCE
THE Highway SERIES
Fender
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AUSTRALIAN LUTHIER PROFILE: KIM LISSARRAGUE

It may be that Australia has more classical guitar makers per head of population than any other country. When shopping for an instrument, one might previously have looked to Europe, the US or Asia, but nowadays many guitarists from these long-established centres are playing Australian-made instruments. Our local luthiers, untethered from tradition, have experimented freely, taking a "from the ground up" approach. In a cultural counter-flow, many international guitar makers are adopting these initially unorthodox concepts.

This influence has been felt locally as well, inspiring younger luthiers such as Kim Lissarrague, who builds modern "Australian Style" concert guitars from his workshop in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney.

As a thirteen-year-old in rural Northern NSW, Kim's desire to play bass in his brother's band was the impetus for his first foray into musical instrument construction.

"I couldn't really afford one at the time, so I thought I'd just make something out of wood from the shed to have something to practise on while I borrowed an instrument from school. About a year later, I had a fully working bass guitar".

Kim feels he had reasonable tool skills for his age. "We lived out in the country and had this workshop/shed down the back where I was always tinkering with stuff, making things like jewellery and skateboards."

Yet there were no commercial aspirations at this early stage.

"It was just fun to do, so I started making electric guitars for my brothers and friends as well as doing the odd repair".

Kim was still a bass player when he heard the guitarist in his band playing nylon string guitar.

"Our guitarist also played classical, and one day he started playing something that made me think, wow, that's really amazing. I want to do that. I asked him for some music, and he gave me the sheet music for "Greensleeves". I taught myself some basic classical guitar technique and learnt the piece. When I told him it didn't sound like what I heard him playing, he gave me some music by Bach. That really impressed me, so I taught myself how to read music and started studying classical guitar formally with a local teacher. I continued to play classical guitar through high school but by the time I finished my HSC I was mainly playing bass, so of course the fingernails went."

After high school, Kim was building and selling the odd bass and acoustic guitar while performing with various local bands, but it wasn't enough to sustain him financially.

"I was working for a local guitar shop in Armidale doing repairs and that sort of thing, but felt there wasn't enough going on locally, so I managed to get a job with a luthier in Melbourne. His name was James Cargill and he had developed a really fine acoustic guitar. Tommy Emmanuel had just bought one

because he was impressed with the sound and the playability. James wanted to focus more on making acoustic guitars but was busy as an in-demand repairer, so he hired me to do some of the building. By the time I'd finished high school, I'd made a dozen guitars, so I didn't need much in the way of training.

"The first day James tested me by getting me to bend a set of sides," Lissarrague recalls. "He said I had passed with flying colours. I was self-taught and a bit rough, but James was such a meticulous and efficient worker, he took me from knowing how to do things in a basic way, to how to do things well and to do it quickly. This is important, as if you make five or ten guitars a year you might struggle to make an income. When I left James' employment, I could make something like twenty-five guitars per year. I was only there two days a week so in the meantime I'd do my own thing in my workshop at home."

Keen to do more of his own thing and in a more serene environment, Kim left the Cargill workshop but was soon back doing repairs.

"I ended up doing some repair work for a music shop in Fitzroy, Melbourne. It had an eclectic mix of things like flamenco guitars, African drums, and accordions. I worked there for a couple of years and one of the owners taught me how to fix violins, which was a fantastic learning experience. I really admire the beautiful design and clever engineering that goes into violins, but I always wanted to make classical guitars because not only do I love their sound and versatility, but you have more freedom in the construction process. At James Cargill's workshop I'd made mostly steel string and electric guitars, but only the occasional nylon string , so, encouraged by a player who worked there, and wanting to broaden my instrument making abilities, I started focusing on classical guitars."

In those pre-internet days, Kim bought a plan from a mail-order luthier supply company in the US.

"The plan was based on a guitar built in 1961 by French maker Robert Bouchet. I didn't use any machines, just hand tools like planes and chisels, just wanting to challenge myself, improve my skills and satisfy my curiosity."

Kim continued to make a handful of classical guitars using historic instruments as templates, but thought back to a time when he was undertaking work experience in high school.

"I was buying parts from my local music shop in Armidale, and they mentioned this guy named Peter Biffin who was doing repairs for them. I was in year nine, so I contacted him to do work experience. He agreed, so I spent a week in his workshop, and he was telling me all sorts of stuff about carbon fibre this and Smallman that, but most of it went over my head because I was young and had just started making my first acoustic guitar from wood salvaged from floorboard and an old cupboard. (Editor's note, this guitar now resides at the National Guitar Museum, Tamworth). But down the line I started recalling some of those things, because Peter was working on the sound boards. His method was radically different from the traditional method, and he was always experimenting and pushing the boundaries. It was an amazing experience. So that gave me a real insight into the modern Australian style, and [taught me] not to get stuck with traditional construction methods. II felt you can pretty much do anything, because the new generation of Australian luthiers basically threw everything out the window and said, 'let's just experiment'."

But there was resistance to these new-fangled upstart Aussie methods, particularly in Europe.

"The classical instrument scene was very conservative back then. There is a story about an Australian- made, carbon fibre reinforced lute being sold to a player in Europe. Someone had dropped a chair on it, smashing it open. The owner took it to a local luthier for repairs and the guy yelled at him for bringing this abomination into his workshop saying, "this isn't a lute!" and told him to get out (laughs)."

Kim was never fond of city life, so he left Melbourne and moved back to NSW, settling in the Blue Mountains.

"I'd never lived in a big city before, so I was getting pretty stressed out and that's when I got into meditation. I moved to the Blue Mountains partly because there was a meditation centre in Leura but also, there's an atmosphere up here that lends itself to creativity. Shortly after arriving I set up my workshop in a fifteen dollar a week two-by-three-metre laundry and got stuck into making classical guitars. Somebody wanted a (New York luthier) Thomas Humphrey Millennial-style guitar with the raised fingerboard, so I made a copy of a copy made by another luthier. It turned out OK; kind of interestingly experimental. So, then I just got some more plans and made a Fleta style, a few more Bouchets, a couple of Hauser styles and then it was you (the interviewer) that said, "Why don't you make a lattice guitar". I had some initial reservations about making lattice-braced guitars. I was slightly concerned about their ability to hold up over time. So, I initially used spruce or cedar for the bracing, but eventually I moved to balsa wood reinforced with carbon fibre. My fears were unfounded, as, if done right, it has strength and durability".

"IF YOU MAKE FIVE OR TEN GUITARS A YEAR YOU MIGHT STRUGGLE TO MAKE AN INCOME. WHEN I LEFT JAMES CARGILL'S EMPLOYMENT, I COULD MAKE TWENTY-FIVE."

Unlike most other modern Australian guitar maker's models, those early instruments were constructed from solid timbers and had a conventional flat back.

"I'd heard about laminated arched backs, but I wasn't sure how to go about it. I was talking to (Australian luthier) Jim Williams

and he said, "I've got this mould for an arched back that you can have." I made my first one hundred arched back lattice guitars with that mould, but it had a very steep arch, making it difficult to get the veneers to bend into shape without splitting. So I designed and fabricated my own back mould."

A high-end, handmade guitar with laminate back and sides?

"It's about conserving energy and making use of that energy. The idea of having a very rigid back and stiff sides is that energy is projected forward. When you play a traditional guitar, you can hear and feel the sound from the back. That's energy being lost, whereas if you have a very rigid back, more of that energy is pushed forward towards the listener. The soundboard, like a speaker cone, is moving freely because the back is not setting up unwanted frequencies. The goal is to get all the notes on the fretboard to activate and sustain equally in a controlled fashion with no clashing overtones. A guitar top, on the one hand, needs be very light and be able to move freely, but with up to seventy kilograms of force pulling on the soundboard, it must be structurally strong as well. The art is to combine these two concepts, where the structural elements and tonal parts work together in harmony to produce a musical tone. Modern materials like carbon fibre aid assist in this as you can make things light without losing the structural integrity because you've got to make a guitar that can resonate but hold that weight."

"IN THE EARLY DAYS I HAD ALL THESE TYPICAL SORTS OF CHARACTERISTICS IN MY HEAD LIKE SWEET AND BRIGHT, BUT ULTIMATELY A GUITAR SHOULD BE EXPRESSIVE AND NOT NECESSARILY HAVE TOO MUCH OF ITS 'OWN SOUND'"

Is the choice between cedar or spruce just a subjective preference, or does Kim feel one is better suited to the lattice style?

"If you're pushing for the extreme possibilities of what lattice has to offer, cedar does lend itself to that design," he says. "But I have a spruce option because some people just prefer it, even though, because of its heavier weight, it's not as efficient but makes a nice sounding guitar anyway. I personally feel my cedar model has a bigger or deeper sound. Interestingly, some recent batches of spruce are as light as cedar. Normally when I make a spruce guitar, I'd thin it a bit more because it is generally a little heavier and a bit stiffer. Recent batches of Engelmann spruce have the same weight as a good piece of cedar, so I treat it in a similar way with really good results. I buy a lot of sound board wood and try to pick out the best pieces. When choosing a piece of wood for the soundboard I'll use a bit of intuition and feel based on experience, but also measure the weight and stiffness, always documenting the results so I can replicate things if they have worked out favourably or change them if they haven't."

Although it is essentially there to protect the guitar, finish material or how it is applied can influence the sound.

"I think the reason people like a French polished shellac finish, as opposed to synthetic, is because it is very thin and it's not as intrusive as lots of layers of thick lacquer. It really has more to do with the application process. If you're lacquering a guitar, and want it gloss, you must build it up enough to be able to polish it and inadvertently, you can end up adding more finishing material than desired. I use a nitro-cellulose matte finish on the soundboard because you don't have to polish it to make it look mirror–like: you can use very little material and not dampen the sound. I use a thicker gloss finish on the back and sides for durability."

After years of honing his craft Kim

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Cargill Custom Guitars
www.cargillcustomguitars.com.au

Peter Biffin Luthier
www.spikefiddle.com

has refined his concepts of the "ideal" classical guitar.

"In the early days I had all these typical sorts of characteristics in my head like sweet and bright but ultimately a guitar should be expressive and not necessarily have too much of its 'own sound'. If it can inspire the player to get the most out of it and respond to his or her technique, then that's the goal. Today's repertoire is varied, so theoretically the guitar should be fairly neutral, and hence versatile. That's an aspect I love about the guitar, it's versatility and ability to play across a broad range of musical styles. I feel my guitars have a balance and refinement about them but also the warmth of a good traditional guitar. They also have the power and volume that a lot of players are looking for."

Kim builds about twenty guitars per year so must work efficiently in an organised workshop.

"I usually have about four going at once, although I'm essentially making one at a time. For instance, as soon as I glue something together it takes a day to dry so I'll start the neck on another. Some things are done in pairs, like joining tops. Once you've lacquered something, it needs to cure for three weeks so I'll move onto another job on another guitar, and so on. I always have something to do. I build at 45-48% relative humidity. I encourage owners of my guitars to try and keep them in an environment somewhere between 40% to 60%RH for most of the time. The necks on all my guitars are reinforced with an adjustable, dual action truss rod."

What would Kim say to the critics of contemporary classical guitars? "People can sometimes have assumptions about modern guitars before they try one, but then they see how expressive they can be," he said. "That's why this style of guitar is popular. It's not necessarily a volume thing but that's there too and, as I said earlier, the player is there to convey the music and that's what an efficient guitar allows you to do more easily. Besides, there is a broad spectrum of lattice design, with some makers using a thicker top with spruce bracing and no carbon fibre, for example, while others will go very light, pushing towards the limits of what is possible. I'm somewhere in the middle, keeping a bit of thickness in the soundboard for a more natural woody tone, but still [retaining] that power."

What is the life of a luthier like? And is it rewarding?

"I find all facets of guitar making enjoyable, from the design stage to the construction process," Lissarrague says. "I love how something so small can make a difference, like: 'if I just shave a tenth of a millimetre off here or there'. I like how it challenges me from a problem-solving angle but then there's the creative side and the physical aspect of working with your hands. All of this can be taxing at times but extremely gratifying. Besides, I've never been afraid of hard work. I find it incredibly satisfying that I can take a few raw materials and turn them into something that makes music and is beautiful to look at as well. And if somebody wants to buy one, that's a bonus."

This profile originally featured in our sister magazine *Australian Classical Guitar*. Issue #1 is available now in all good newsagents.

GOLDEN YEARS

The 1950s and 60s were decades of innovation and rapid technical development at Gretsch – spearheaded by guitarist, demonstrator and designer Jimmie Webster – that resulted in the design aesthetic and sonic character that continue to define the brand…

Words Huw Price **Photography** Olly Curtis & Phil Barker

If the record-buying public had warmed to Jimmie Webster's 'Touch System' two-handed tapping technique, then the Gretsch brand that we know today might never have existed. Webster was an accomplished guitarist who played for Woody Herman and Count Basie during the 1930s, and who also tuned pianos when he wasn't travelling the US and appearing on TV to demonstrate Gretsch guitars. His role at Gretsch had similarities with Ted McCarthy's at Gibson and Leo Fender's at his namesake brand. He was pivotal in establishing the post-war Gretsch aesthetic and was a driving force behind Gretsch's most iconic models. He also developed hardware, pickups and wiring harnesses.

Like his contemporaries, Webster observed trends in the automobile industry and the way car manufacturers maintained demand for older models by introducing new features and colours every year. With Fender revolutionising guitar design and rock 'n' roll driving the market, Webster probably understood that Gretsch guitars were still essentially pre-war archtops and radical thinking was needed to stay in the game.

The 1950s and 60s were decades of change and innovation at Gretsch. Webster's contributions range from the iconic and wildly successful to borderline bonkers, and we'll be discussing them all throughout this feature as we take a deep dive into the technical development of Gretsch Guitars throughout the vintage era.

Electric Experiments

The first Gretsch Electromatic appeared back in 1939 and it featured a non-cutaway body with multi-coloured binding, a single 'neck' pickup and two Bakelite control knobs. These Electromatics were actually manufactured for Gretsch by Kay, and the quality doesn't look that good.

Gretsch production was put on hold when the US joined World War II, and Gretsch players who wanted to go electric were more likely to retrofit aftermarket 'floating' pickups. The famous photo of Django Reinhart playing a Gretsch shows a blonde Synchromatic archtop, most likely fitted with a Leutone pickup.

Meanwhile, out in Ohio, a company called the Fox Sound Equipment Corporation had started making pickups for guitars. An accomplished local guitarist called Harry DeArmond had been taken on as a design consultant during the 1930s and the company's name was soon changed to Rowe Industries.

With its power, brightness and clarity, the Dynasonic is often associated with the greatest Gretsch tones of the vintage era

DeArmond Dynasonic

Gretsch production was ramping back up by 1949, when the company introduced a new 6185 Electromatic model featuring a single pickup named after its inventor Harry DeArmond. The DeArmond Dynasonic or 'Fidelatone', as it was sometimes called, would remain Gretsch's pickup of choice until 1958.

The Dynasonic had six individually adjustable magnets and typically read about 14kohms. But they were wound with relatively thin 44 AWG plain enamel wire, so they're not as hot as that figure suggests. Gretsch also used celluloid shims to balance out bridge and neck pickups. With its power, brightness and clarity, the Dynasonic is often associated with the greatest Gretsch tones of the vintage era. But Chet Atkins – who was Gretsch's highest profile endorser – never liked them. He struggled with hum and found it difficult to achieve a balanced response. He also felt the strong magnets compromised sustain by exerting excessive pull on the strings.

1. A 1955 Gretsch 6196 Country Club in Cadillac Green with two DeArmond Dynasonic pickups

2. The DeArmond Dynasonic was Gretsch's pickup of choice until the Filter'Tron and HiLo'Tron were introduced into the company's range

GUITAR COURTESY OF ATB GUITARS

Filter'Trons

Chet got to know Ray Butts when he bought one of his Echosonic amplifiers, and he had made Ray aware of the issues he was experiencing with Dynasonics. A while later, Ray showed Chet a prototype pickup loaded in his test guitar and asked him, "How would you like a pickup that doesn't hum?" According to Ray, that happened in 1954, and by September 1956 Chet was playing the Grand Ole Opry with a set of Ray's humbuckers installed in his black 6120 prototype. Chet suggested to Gretsch that they should consider using Ray's pickups.

Gretsch wasn't pleased about Rowe Industries' new production deal with Chuck Rubovits of Harmony Guitars, so it was agreed that Ray and Jimmie Webster would collaborate to develop a production version of Ray's pickup. Gretsch would manufacture them in-house and in return Ray would receive royalties.

In 1957, the 'Filter'Tron Electronic Guitar Head' was launched at the same trade show as the Gibson PAF. The production version had small transparent nylon bobbins with space for the 42 AWG magnet wire. Vintage Filter'Trons typically read in the 4k to 5k range, so thicker Alnico V magnets were used to strengthen the magnetic field and increase inductance, which boosted midrange and output.

(1961)
GRETSCH CHET ATKINS 6120 SINGLE CUT

Arguably the most iconic Gretsch model of all, the 6120 underwent many changes between 1955 and 1961. ATB's all-original final-year example here was the first 6120 imported to Ireland. It features a side screw mortice and tenon neck joint, Filter'Tron humbucking pickups, a 'mud switch' and Gretsch's specially designed B6C Bigsby vibrato. At 2.25 inches, the 1961 model had the thinnest single-cutaway body, and the revised neck joint enhances sustain in the upper registers. Consequently, many players find this version of the 6120 the easiest to handle. The painted 'MG' initials stand for Michael Gilligan, who bought this guitar brand-new and played it until very recently.

GUITAR COURTESY OF ATB GUITARS

HiLo'Tron

Since the Filter'Tron was the only pickup the brand made, Gretsch fitted them to every guitar. Some customers must have been happy to forgo fretboard and f-hole binding when they were getting exactly the same tone at a far lower price. Maybe that's why Gretsch decided to create a new single-coil pickup that could be mounted directly onto the body. From mid-1960 onwards, lower-end models such as the Tennessean and Anniversary were reconfigured for this new pickup.

The HiLo'Tron wasn't really half a Filter'Tron. Although they had the same bobbin, HiLo'Trons were wound with thinner wire and had smaller pole screws. With a bar magnet mounted on an angled steel plate and a vertical steel magnet keeper on one side of the magnet, the construction was quite different. Bridge HiLo'Trons also had wood spacers to position them closer to the strings. Lower in treble and output than a Filter'Tron, HiLo'Trons produce a warm, mellow and clear tone that is especially popular with players who are into 1960s tones.

Super'Tron

Introduced in 1964, the Super'Tron was a variation on the Filter'Tron, with laminated blades, rather than adjustable pole screws. Aficionados praise its refined treble, high output and full-bodied tone. This pickup featured on various Gretsch models, including the Viking, Monkees, Roc Jet, Astro Jet and Streamliner.

GUITAR COURTESY OF GARDINER HOULGATE AUCTIONEERS

Wiring

Dual-pickup Gretsches made prior to 1958 typically have a three-way pickup selector and four control knobs. There's a volume for each pickup, plus a master volume located by the cutaway. The fourth knob served as a master tone and potentiometer values were 1 meg-ohm. Between approximately 1955 and 1957 many Gretsches were fitted with unusual stacked tone potentiometers and two capacitors. Designed to be set about halfway for a 'neutral' tone, the control could roll off treble or bass, depending on which direction it was turned.

To coincide with the new Filter'Trons, 1958 saw the introduction of the infamous three-way 'mud switch' in place of a tone control. Bypassed in the middle position, the switch offered two levels of preset treble roll-off. It was a good idea badly executed due to unsuitable capacitor values. Years later, Gretsch expert Tom 'TV' Jones talked Gretsch into replacing the vintage 0.1μF and 0.047μF capacitors with 0.012μF and 0.0039μF, and the mud switch finally emerged from the swamp.

The mud switch circuit featured 500k pots, but the way they're wired in parallel with the master volume results in a 250k impedance. This possibly explains why the single-pickup/single-volume Anniversary model sounds brighter than the two-pickup version. Gretsch's final innovation was an on/off switch that appeared around 1961.

Bodies & Bracing

Until the mid-50s, Gretsch's big archtops were constructed in a conventional way. Most tops and backs were formed from pressed plywood and supported with parallel top bracing. As a friend and admirer of Les Paul, Chet Atkins was keenly aware of the design's sustain shortcomings and lobbied hard for something closer to Les's log concept.

A compromise was reached when Gretsch developed a 'trestle bracing' system and started fitting it in late 1957 to coincide with the introduction of Filter'Trons.

Responding to Gibson's Les Paul, Gretsch introduced small 'solidbody' models in 1953 – including the Duo Jet and the top of the line Roundup

The idea was to physically couple the top and back to make the body structure more rigid and stable. The first version, which is known as the 'heavy trestle', involved parallel braces on the top and back, with the pine trestles glued along the length of the top braces between the neck block and the bridge. Legs protruded downwards at each end and were glued to the rear braces. Finally, another block of pine was glued between the rearmost legs, spanning the area beneath the bridge. A 'light trestle' design followed in 1959, without the back braces and the bridge block. The trestles were joined to the back via small 'feet'. Like Brian Setzer, most Gretsch players consider the light trestle to be the best sounding.

As the 1950s played out, single-cutaway Gretsch archtop bodies gradually became thinner. For instance, the 6120 model started out 2.75 inches deep and was 2.25 inches by 1961. Introduced in late 1957, the Country Gentleman had a wider 17-inch body with a two-inch depth. The Country Gentleman also had fake f-holes, which was a return to Chet Atkin's preferred specs when Gretsch built the first 6120 prototypes. Fake f-holes were later fitted to the HiLo'Tron Tennessean model and post-'61 6120s, as Gretsch started to introduce thinner double-cutaway bodies.

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3. A Gretsch 1962 Double Anniversary 6117 with a pair of HiLo'Tron pickups

4. The HiLo'Tron was a single-coil pickup that took its name from Gretsch declaring that it gave "brilliant highs and mellow lows"

Responding to Gibson's Les Paul, Gretsch introduced small 'solidbody' models in 1953. These included the Duo Jet and the top of the line Roundup, with the Jet Firebird following up in 1954. In reality, all were small-bodied archtops with heavily chambered mahogany bodies that became double-cutaways in 1961. Gretsch's first true solidbody was the Corvette of 1961. It started out like a cruder version of a double-cutaway Les Paul Junior or Special, but by 1963 the body edges had acquired SG-like sculpting. With an all-mahogany set-neck construction, the model was available with one or two HiLo'Tron pickups. The Burns vibrato and bar bridge didn't do it any favours, but if you drop in a P90 (like Rory Gallagher), a Filter'Tron or a mini-humbucker, they can sound amazing.

Neck Joints

Gretsch archtop necks were fitted using a traditional 'dovetail' joint, but they were not cut with the accuracy of manufacturers such as Gibson and Martin. Gretsch often relied on unusually thick wooden shims, and sometimes cardboard, to close the gaps. It's fair to say that if a vintage Gretsch hasn't had a neck reset, it probably needs one.

Prior to 1961, Gretsch drove a wood screw through the heel and into the neck block, and a circular plug was used to conceal the recessed screw head. This screw doesn't actually strengthen the joint and may well have been deployed to hold necks steady while glue dried and to simplify the clamping.

Towards the later 1950s and early 60s, Gretsch began using a mortise and tenon joint. The

(1963)
GRETSCH 6129 DUO JET CHAMPAGNE SPARKLE

Although Gretsch's smaller Jet and Duo Jet models are often assumed to have solid bodies, they are actually heavily chambered. In 1961 Gretsch reconfigured the body for a double-cutaway shape, much like Gibson's redesign of the Les Paul Junior and Special models. While Duo Jets are not uncommon, ATB's 6129 has the rare Champagne Sparkle top. Unlike Fender's sprayed metal flake finishes, Gretsch's tops were actually covered with sheets of Nitron Plastic, which Gretsch had long used to wrap drum shells. Other colour options included Gold, Tangerine, Burgundy and the more common Silver. This 1963 example features a 'mud switch' circuit with an on/off switch, a Space Control bridge and a Burns Vibrato.

GUITAR COURTESY OF ATB GUITARS

inaccuracy and need for oversized shims remained, but the securing screw was shifted to either the cutaway side or the back of the body. So whenever a vintage Gretsch is undergoing a neck reset, the plug and screw must first be removed.

Finishes

For the most part, Gretsch guitars were sprayed with traditional nitrocellulose lacquer. However, it must be remembered that Gretsch also manufactured drums. Jimmie Webster realised that the 'Nitron' plastic wrap that Gretsch used for plywood shells could also be applied to guitar bodies using a vacuum press. This finish can be seen on Duo Jets, Jet Firebirds and, most spectacularly, on the metallic Silver Jet and Champagne Sparkle Jet. The Nitron is so tough that it's common to see vintage Gretsches with heavily worn backs and sides and tarnished hardware that retain pristine tops.

Bridges & Tailpieces

Gretsch was one of the first companies to offer a bridge with individually adjustable string intonation. Designed by Sebastiano (Johnny) Melita, the Synchro Sonic was made by Melita and first featured on the Electro II around 1951. Soon after, Melita bridges were adopted for all premium Gretsch electrics, with carved rosewood preferred for lesser models. However, Bigsby-equipped guitars were paired with Bigsby's compensated aluminium tailpiece.

Later in 1958, Webster's Space Control bridge appeared, which was basically a threaded bar that was bent into a radius and fitted with six grooved thumbwheels. The idea was to allow players to adjust the thumbwheels to achieve their preferred string spacing. Gretsch also began fitting its own rudimentary but fine-sounding bar bridge by 1958. The shape and dimensions varied, but it was a bent and plated brass bar with milled string grooves.

Guitar makers from Boston such as Stromberg, and New York's D'Angelico and Gretsch were not averse to Jazz Age razzmatazz

With the exception of the earliest fixed Melitas, vintage Gretsch floating bridges tend to be a bit too buoyant. Any enthusiastic player can send them sliding, with predictable consequences for tuning. Thankfully, though, modern Gretsches have pins to keep them stable.

Throughout the 50s, most Gretsches had either a Bigsby or a G cutout tailpiece. The tailpiece came in two versions – six inches long for archtops such as the Anniversary, Streamliner and Clipper, and five inches for the various Jet models. The White Falcon and Penguin had a tubular 'Cadillac' tailpiece design. Where Bigsby vibratos featured, Gretsch bought them from the manufacturer; B3s were fitted to smaller bodies and B6s to the bigger archtops. But in 1960, the bespoke B3C and B6C vibratos appeared with a 'V' cutout and 'Gretsch By Bigsby' on the front plate. Gretsch also used an inferior Burns vibrato on Corvette and various Jet models from 1962.

Webster's Wonders

While Gibson had mostly pursued elegant craftsmanship, and Martin favoured an austere and near Shaker-like design aesthetic, guitar makers from Boston such as Stromberg, and New York's D'Angelico and Gretsch were not averse to Jazz Age razzmatazz. Jimmie Webster's more eye-catching efforts, like the Penguin, White Falcon and metallic green Country Club, came straight out of this tradition. Ditto the 'country' motifs that were first seen on the 1953 Roundup and would later appear on the 1956 6120.

These models are now regarded as iconic, but Webster innovations weren't always so successful. One such item was the Tone Twister, which was intended as a vibrato for Gretsches without Bigsbys. Clamping across the strings in the gap between the bridge and tailpiece, the Tone Twister is known in Gretsch circles as the 'String Snapper'.

As a piano tuner, Webster was aware that pianos are 'stretch tuned', with the upper registers a tad sharp to sound sweeter. He decided to apply this idea to guitar by angling the upper frets. The result was T-Zone Tempered Treble that featured on the Gretsch Viking. It didn't catch on and Chet Atkins described the idea as "a little far-fetched". Meanwhile, Gretsch was persisting with non-intonatable bridges.

Access to the electronics, and Gretsch's somewhat agricultural string muffling mechanism, was improved when the brand began cutting a huge hole in the back of the body. To conceal the ugly cover plate, Webster devised a pop on pad that looks like cheap upholstery and provides all the sensuousness of damp leatherette.

Webster's 'Floating Sound Unit' was introduced in 1966.

GUITAR COURTESY OF GARDINER HOULGATE AUCTIONEERS

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5. A 1990 double-cut G7594 White Falcon fitted with a pair of Filter'Tron pickups

6. Ray Butts' noise-cancelling Filter'Tron made its debut in 1957 at the same trade show where Gibson unveiled its PAF

It involved a three-bar frame positioned in the bridge position, with a 440Hz tuning fork screwed onto the underside that passed through a hole into the body. The idea was to enhance sustain and harmonics, but if it isn't carefully set up, the tuning fork generates wolf tones and it's impossible to set intonation.

Maybe Webster was simply ahead of his time with his two-handed Touch System tapping technique. Such was his belief that he teamed up with Ray Butts to develop a stereo guitar and amplifier system specifically for his playing style. This 'Project-O-Sonic Stereo' setup involved reconfigured Filter'Tron pickups that split the signals from the top three strings and the bottom three, and routed them to separate amplifiers. Gretsch models with Project-O-Sonic electronics included the White Falcon, Country Club and Anniversary, but it wasn't a commercial success.

Maybe some of Webster's inventions might have proved more successful if Gretsch had been able to provide the technical and engineering expertise to back him up. Even so, Webster's contribution to Gretsch and his wider influence on guitar design cannot be denied and many of the models he helped to design are still being made today.

(2009)
GRETSCH G6120WCST STEPHEN STERN MASTERBUILT

Vintage Gretsches are rightly lauded for countless reasons, but build quality could be a bit hit and miss. Even ones that have managed to survive without any binding rot or loosened neck joints will probably need a lot of work to make them viable gigging guitars. For the ultimate in vintage vibe and build quality, the guitars produced by Stephen Stern's team at Gretsch's US Custom Shop are second to none. This 6120 was made there in 2009 and features pinstriping by renowned car hot-rod artist Junior Bo Huff. With a flat handle Bigsby, aged DeArmond pickups and an aluminium bridge that's compensated for a plain G string, it's almost a 50s fantasy Gretsch.

GUITAR COURTESY OF ATB GUITARS

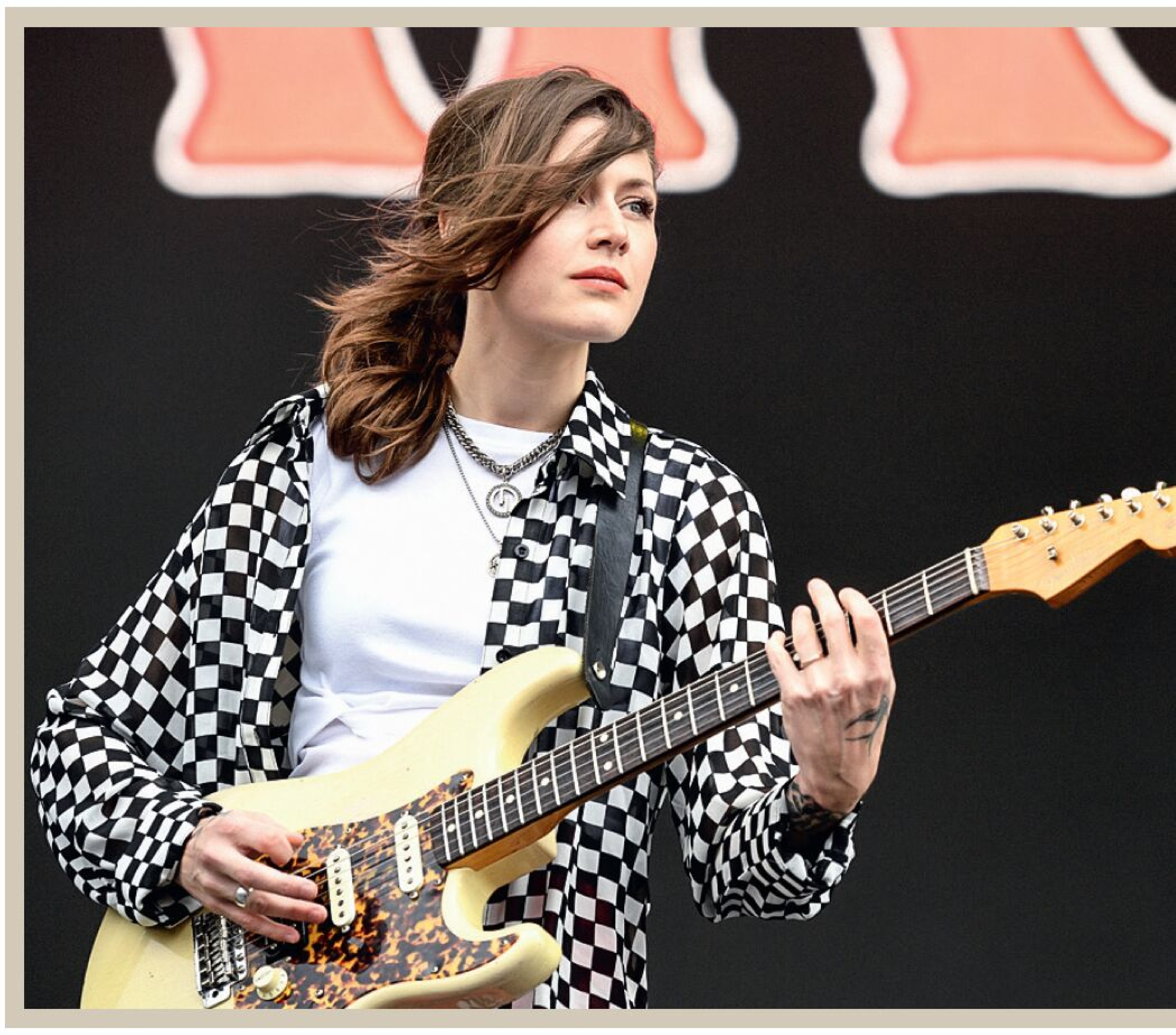
All-Star MASTERCLASS

Words Ellie Rogers, Amit Sharma

Star Tips

Shortcuts to better playing, writing and recording – from star players including **Mark Tremonti**, **Misha Mansoor**, **Rebecca Lovell** and **Nuno Bettencourt**. Plus! Audio accompaniment thanks to our sibling mag *Total Guitar*

Photo Getty



Beating writer's block

Misha Mansoor & Jake Bowen
Periphery

Misha: Sometimes people ask about writer's block, and maybe if you're not the kind of person where staying up late works for your schedule and it's more difficult, just try a different time where you're not all there. Maybe wake up super early. For me, staying up very late sometimes will yield looking at things differently and it's a way to take a different perspective on it.
Jake: It's interesting, when we're writing, because we'll shift our hours. We all keep pretty normal hours, more or less, when we're not doing music stuff. But, when it comes to an album, when we're writing, we'll shift our hours to where we're getting going in the afternoon, and then we'll stay up all night. When it comes to recording and tracking stuff, we go back to a normal schedule because you don't really need to utilise that. Misha used to call it 'The Focus Hour'.

Mic placement

Jamie Hall
Tigercub

A big secret of my sound is DI-ing straight into a console preamp. I doubt I'm the first person to do that. I think it's what Marc Bolan did with all the T. Rex stuff. But a guitar with no amp, basically straight into a preamp, is something that I've always done throughout my career. It's always given this sound, which I think is probably present on all my guitar sounds. Then, another one I've found is a mic placement thing. If you get a '57 on a cab and you go right up to the cloth, it sounds good. You can move it around within that and it sounds great. But, if you move the '57 back a couple of feet until you find the point where all of the air pressure, all of the waveforms converge from each speaker. It's bizarre. You're moving the mic back and it sounds more and more like an amp in the room because there's more ambience, and then you hit this one moment and everything comes right up front and in your face, and it's like you're close mic'ing it. But the microphone is actually three or feet from the cab. That sounds f*cking amazing! That is the best way to mic a cab that's crushingly loud.

Finding your own voice

Rebecca Lovell
Larkin Poe

There's so much material out there on YouTube and instructional websites. From Facebook to Instagram, there's such a bombardment of incredible technical players who have ascended the heights of musicianship and theoretical knowledge, it can sometimes feel demoralising for others. I might go and watch Zakk Wylde play and think to myself, 'How is this humanly possible, how is he physically doing this?' For the rest of us mere mortals, my advice would be to exist in your own lane. Find your own power and have a less is more approach, if that's what you are looking for. Always try to let your personality come out in your playing instead of just ripping. Yeah, we all need to continue growing as players and work on technique as far as speed and precision, but it's also important to remember the guitar should be fun. It should have attitude. You should let that carry you away at times, not at the expense of technicality or getting yourself off the hook by playing easy stuff. There's a lot of power in that punk sensibility. Just let it be brute and simple. Let your guitar speak for itself. That's something I've been working hard on in recent years – embracing my own playing. Because, of course, I live in a household with an incredibly gifted guitarist [husband Tyler Bryant]. I learned I have to find my own lane and be comfortable in it. That's been a huge turning point for my own soloing.

Zakk Wylde
Black Label Society, Ozzy Osbourne, Pantera

Just play what you love and stick with what moves you. I remember reading an interview with Johnny Winter when I was younger where he was asked if he'd tried playing anything other than blues, like experimenting with classical or jazz. He said the only thing that moved him was the blues, so that's why he stuck with it. If you play what moves you and what you love, then that's what you're most likely to excel at. I always thought it was weird when people say you should learn how to play piano to help you play guitar. That's like saying you should learn violin because that will help you with the bass… That never translated to me. If you love piano, play that. If you don't have much interest in it, then no, it won't make you a better guitarist.

Songwriting

Mark Tremonti & Myles Kennedy
Alter Bridge

Mark: I never listen to other bands for song stuff. I like to get away completely from everything. If anything, I'll go on YouTube and there's these meditative things for people to put on while studying – cool background things. They sound almost like you're in the womb or something. Each one of them has a different kind of vibe and you can write with those going on. There's no drumbeat, there's no chord changes, there's just a key. Those are fun to write to.

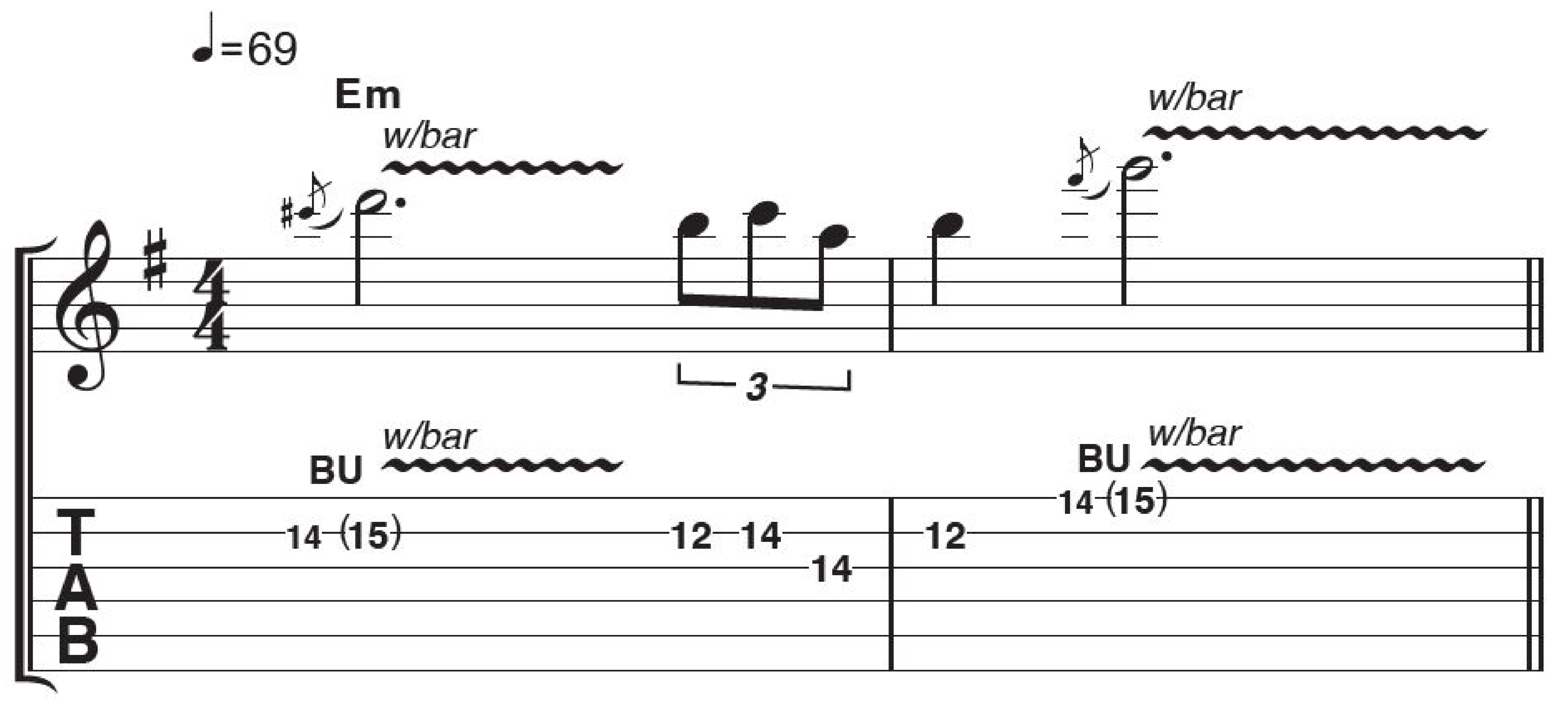
Myles: There was a lesson I learned when making one the very first records I did for a major label, with a band called The Mayfield Four. We were working with this guy called Jerry Harrison who is the guitar player for Talking Heads. He said something that has really stuck with me for the last 25 years. We were talking about getting in the studio, and at the time – this is going to show how long ago it was – *OK Computer* by Radiohead was coming out, and I was a massive Radiohead fan. So I told him I was going to go to the store and get that record. This was back when you'd go to a store to get records! He was like, 'Don't do that. Wait until we're done making this record because it'll end up influencing you.' That really stuck with me. You have to keep it self contained and don't let yourself feed off other things during this part of the process. Then when I'm done, I allow myself to listen to whatever I can get my hands on.

Pedalboard configuration

Scott Reynolds
CLT DRP

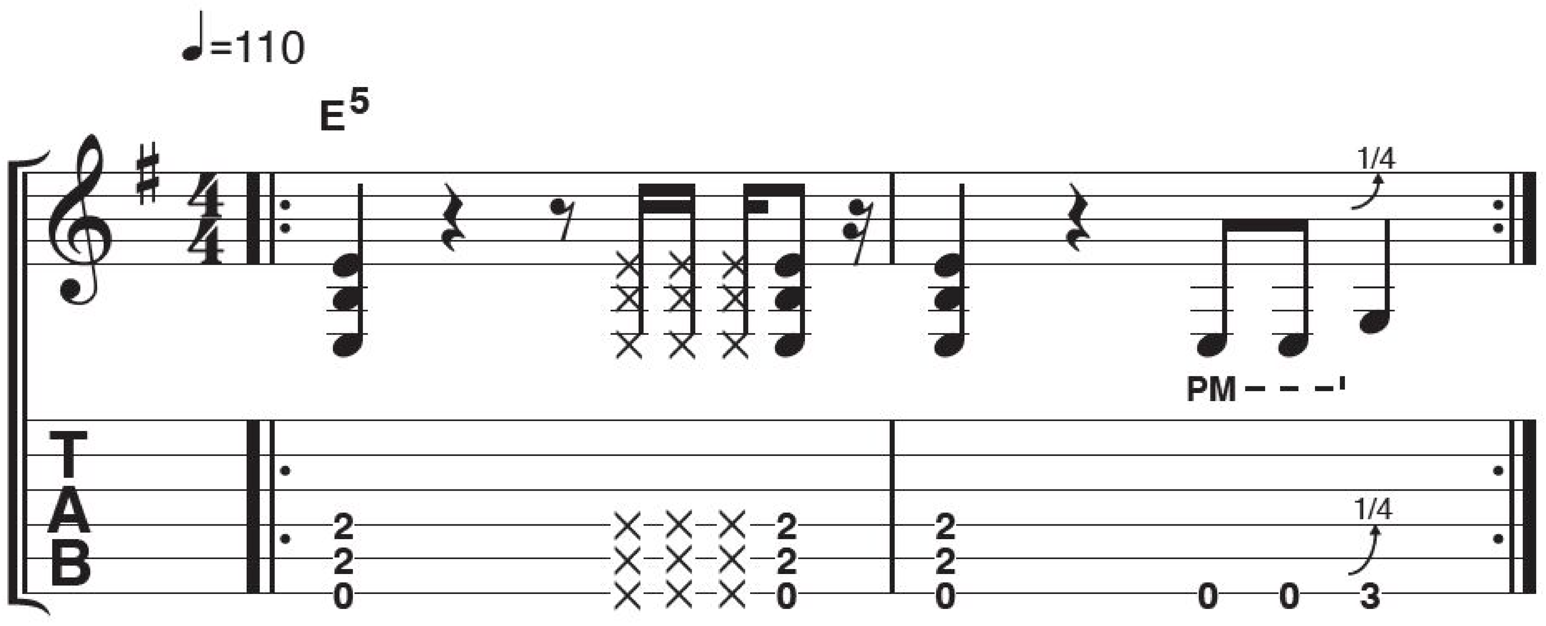
I wouldn't say there's any strict rules. Experimentation and trying things for yourself is always good. With drives and overdrives, some pedals are going to have more headroom than others. So find out which has more headroom, and put that after. If it's the other way around, when you chuck that on, it can squash the sound. I've found that with my fuzz and my overdrive. I don't know why, but wahs and stuff like that seem to be better nearer the beginning, before my drives. I like delays pre- and post. It depends on what I want. Sometimes it's nice to have the distortion delay, and sometimes if you do that Edge stuff with the dotted eighth delay or one note delay stuff, you want that to be really precise.

WRITING OVER A PAD bit.ly/tg376audio



For our example we have created an E minor pad to solo over. As per Mark Tremonti's advice there is no drum beat or chord changes to navigate. This frees up the creative process and it is fun to noodle ideas over this pad. We've included the backing track so you can try both our example and some ideas of your own.

USING STACKED DRIVES bit.ly/tg376audio



Our CLT DRP style example combines fuzz and overdrive to create a 'stacked' drive effect. We plugged straight into the fuzz then added extra overdrive after. Our riff is relatively easy, but sounds great with the drums. The trick here is to play the riff with rhythmic accuracy and let the stacked drive tone do the rest!

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Slide tips for beginners

Erja Lyytinen

It took time for me to master the technique. Muting the strings that you are not playing is essential in the beginning. You could have a simple song – maybe even a kids' song – and just try to get each note sounding lovely. By the same token, you need to be relaxed with your hands – not stiff. At first, you want to work on getting each note to sound at the right pitch, and then when you've mastered that, you can let those other strings ring if you need them for effect. I use open tunings, so if I play in Open D or Open G I have different guitars. Or, if I need a different key, I just use capos. Sometimes it's very cool if you're playing a blues solo in D, you can just let all of those strings ring.

Arranging

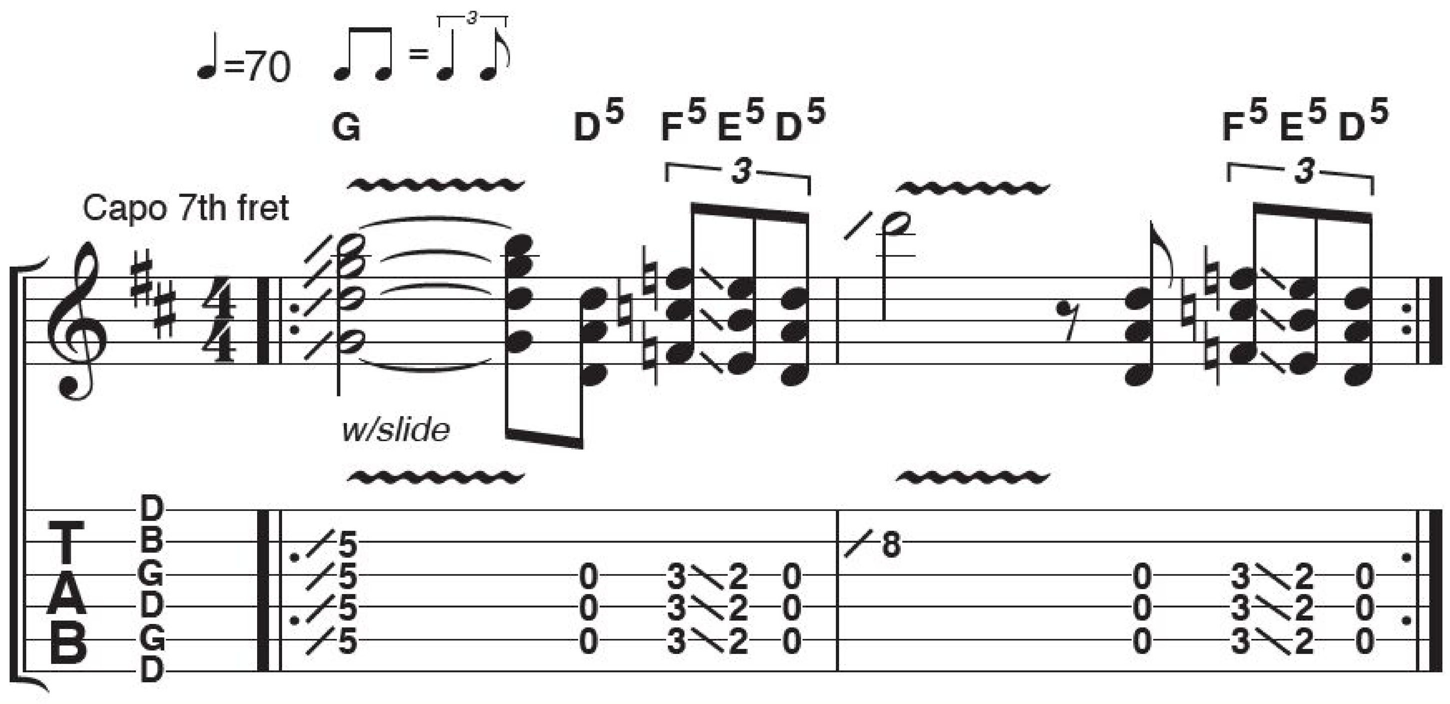
John Petrucci
Dream Theater

I got turned onto prog rock through bands like Rush and Yes. What they were doing was different to what else was going on in regular rock or metal. The players were more technical and they'd have extended solos. It wasn't about the pop or concise side of music, it was more about experimenting and bringing in more musicianship to blow the song structure thing out of the water. If you want to have a four-minute intro to your song or write something that's 15 minutes long, that's fine!

The term progressive rock has expanded exponentially over the last 20 years. You used to be able to say prog rock was a certain thing but it's really started to evolve splinter. You can call Radiohead prog and you can call Meshuggah prog, yet they sound nothing alike.

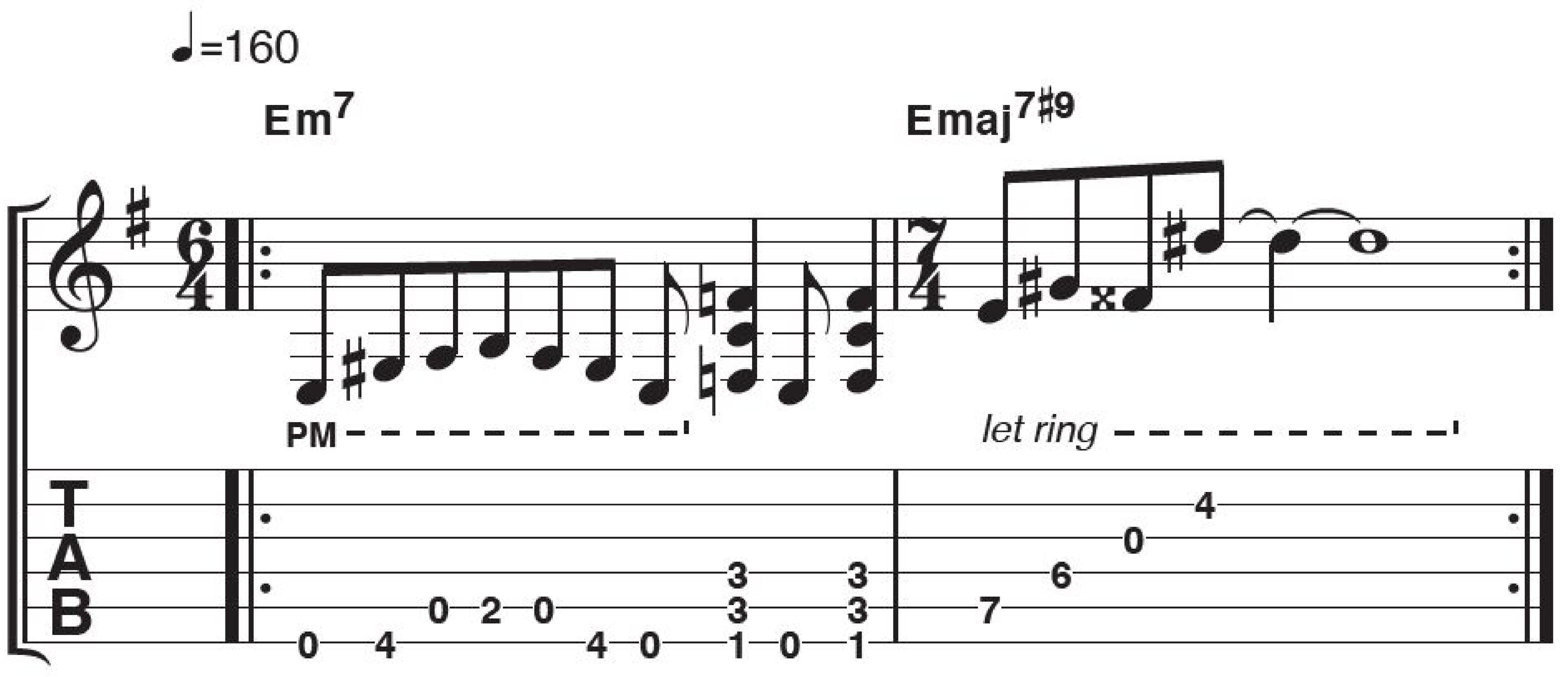
When I listen to symphonic music, certain pieces feel very proggy. If you take the title track from our album *A View From The Top Of The World*, it has various movements over 21 minutes or so just like a classical symphony would. Those vary in mood, tempo and time signatures and yet there are melodic themes that go throughout and reoccur, coming back in different ways every time – that's a very classical thing to do. The musicians are required to be able to play whatever the composer had in mind, from things that are super sensitive to something bombastic and really fast or technical. We put the same requirements on ourselves.

CAPO'D OPEN-G TUNED SLIDE LICK IN D bit.ly/tg376audio



Our slide example combines open G tuning with a capo at the 7th fret to place us in the key of D major. Our tab shows the concert pitches in the notation and the fret positions of the slide treating the 7th fret capo as the zero fret. As per Erja's tips, be sure to line the slide up directly over the frets to ensure good intonation.

MOOD, TEMPO, TIME SIGNATURES, THEMES bit.ly/tg376audio



We can't possibly cover the movements of a 20-minute epic here, but we can take a look at some of Petrucci's techniques. Our riff shifts in mood from heavy rock to lighter, mellower sounds as the time signature changes from six to seven beats in the bar. Experiment by expanding these ideas into longer sections.

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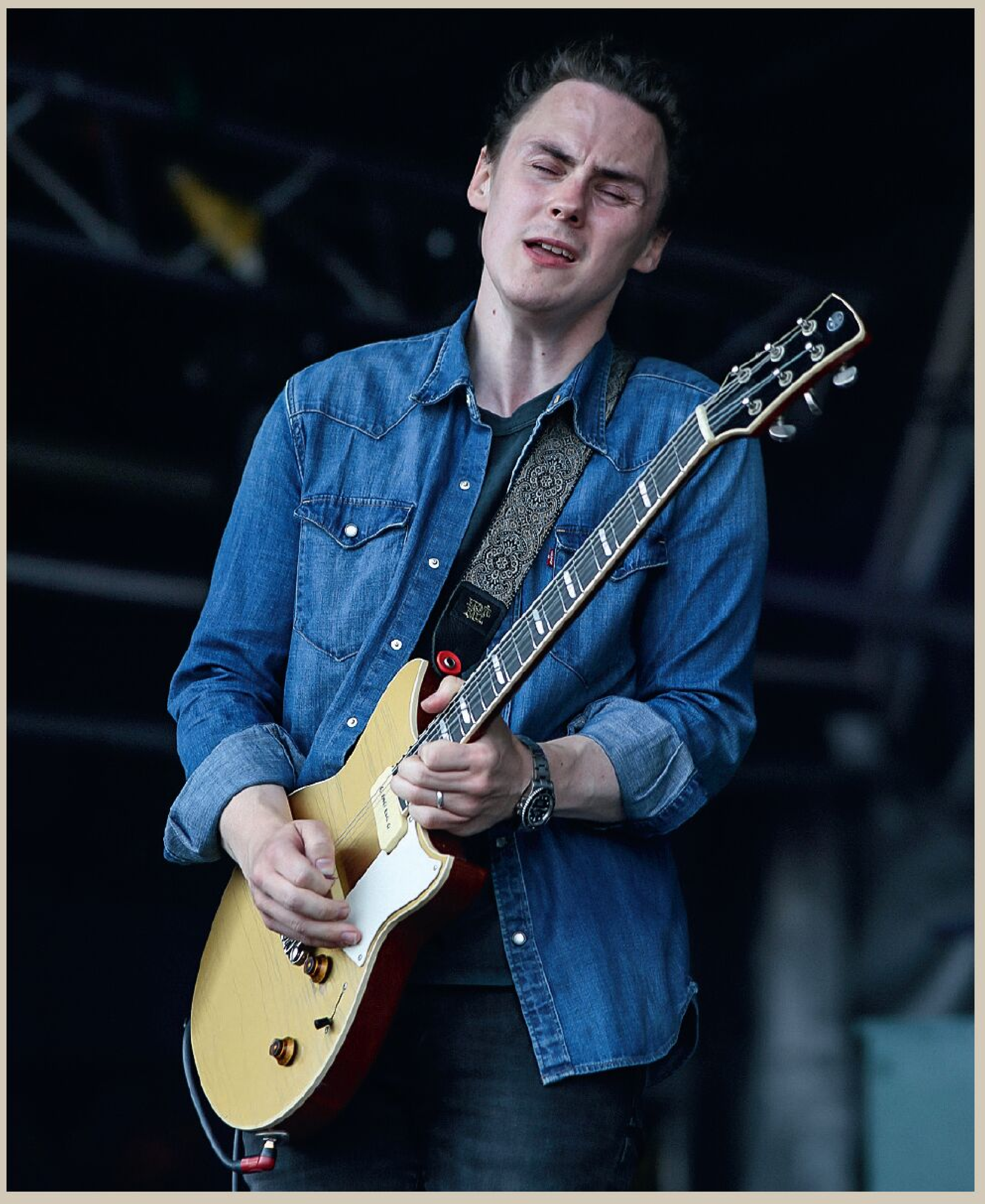


Tone

Chris Buck
Cardinal Black

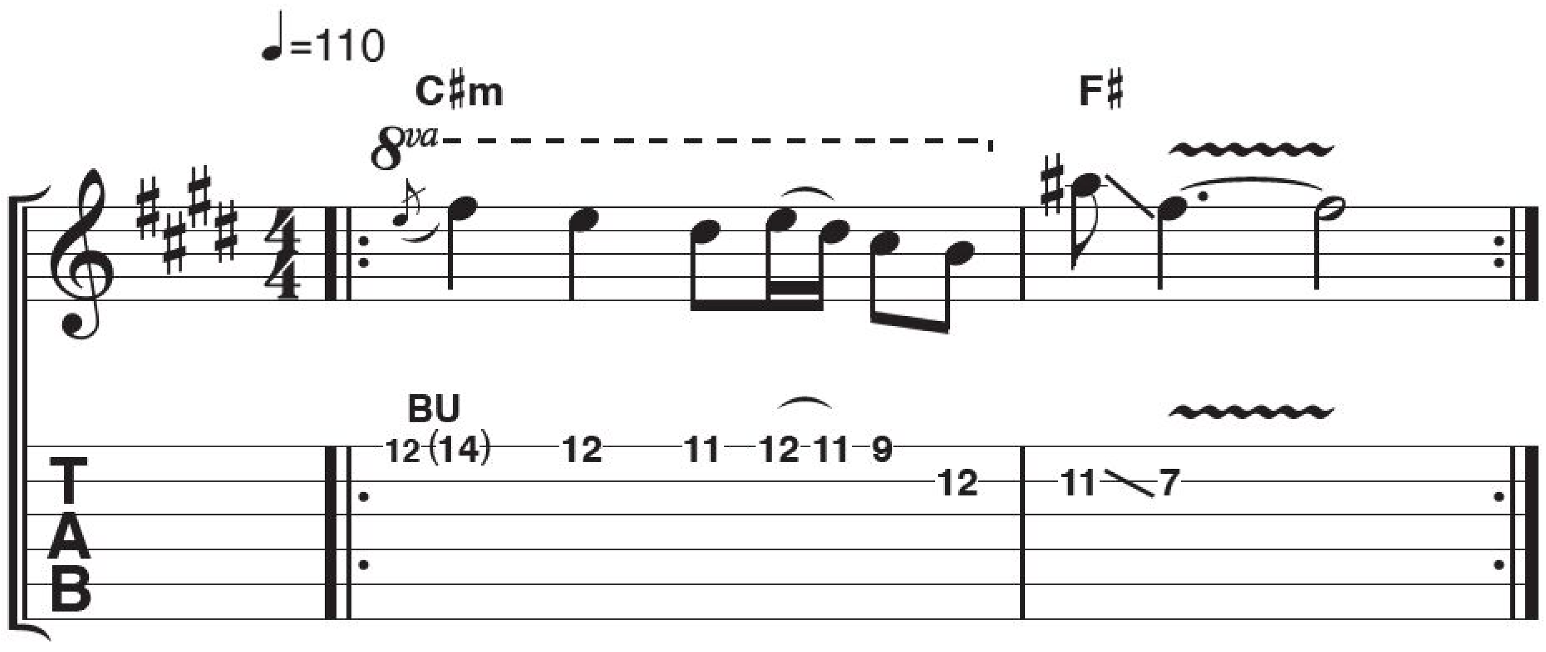
Every part of the signal chain – whether that starts with your fingers, or whether that starts with the pickups – is very much integral. I get a lot of comments on YouTube saying that I sound exactly the same whatever I'm plugged into, and I think a massive part of that is because my hands just sound a certain way. I'm a fairly aggressive player and I'm fairly tactile. I play a lot with my fingers on my right hand. So, straight away there's quite a touch responsive thing to my playing, which you probably wouldn't get as much if it was exclusively the pick.

Alternate picking

Nuno Bettencourt
Extreme

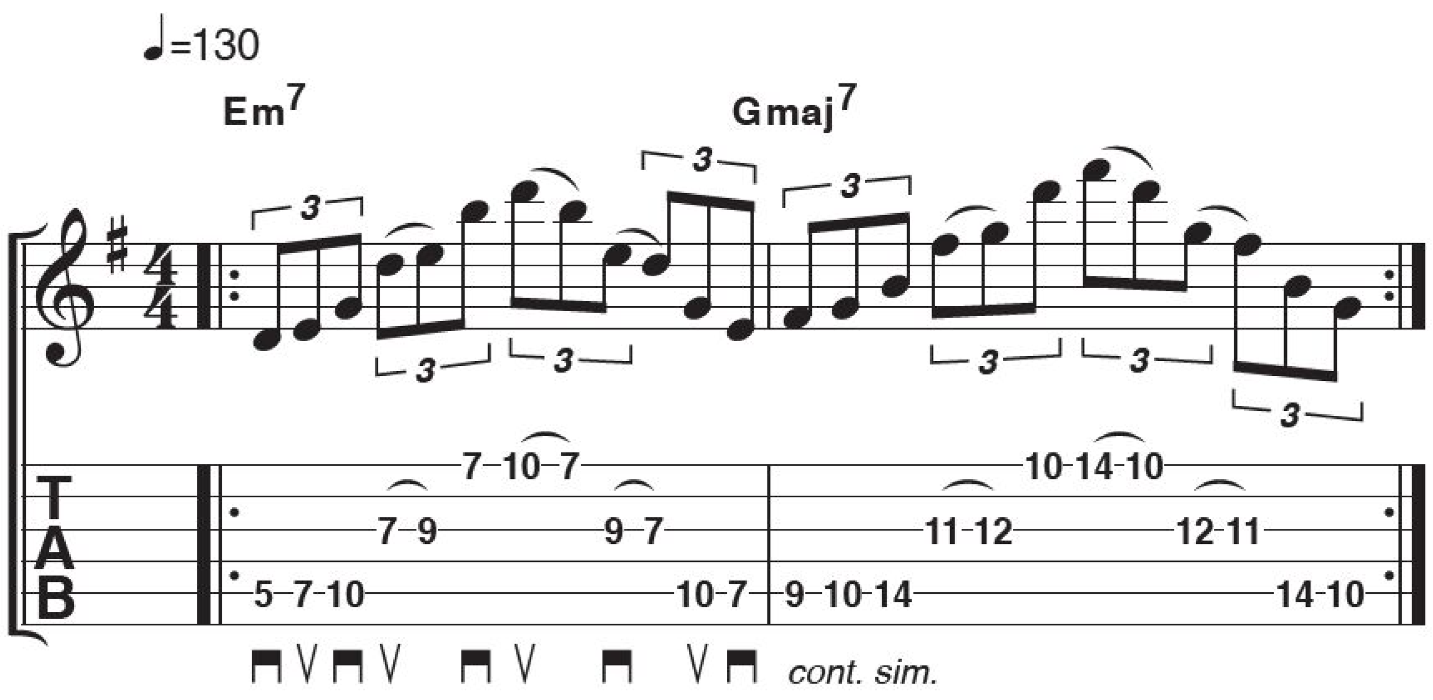
I remember many years ago someone telling me that I was skipping strings a lot, or changing how I picked on each one. Usually, people play straight scales, runs or arpeggios. I always like to skip and bounce around. Being a fan of Al Di Meola and Yngwie Malmsteen, it would always be super smooth or very percussive, with no in-betweens. Eddie Van Halen did it a lot as well, firing up those runs in less mechanical ways, almost like how a violinist would go from soft to hard. You don't have to pick every note. There's no medal for it. Who cares if you pick everything? When I break it down, I'm only picking every two out of six, or four out of six. Zakk Wylde would always tell me, 'None of us are reinventing anything, really!' But he'd say we're all making our own soup. His might have more ZZ Top and swing. Mine might have Al Di Meola; Brian May is in there, too. Yngwie has his influences, too – he's influenced by Uli Jon Roth and Ritchie Blackmore. But we all have our own flavours.

FINGERSTYLE LEAD bit.ly/tg376audio



Our Chris Buck-style example uses the fingers of the picking hand for a more expressive touch. It also maximises the dynamics in your delivery and, some will say, makes for the best tone. Our melody is relatively easy to play and the notes follow the underlying chords.

MIXING PICKING AND LEGATO bit.ly/tg376audio



Our Nuno-style example combines string skipping with a mixture of alternate picking and hammer-ons and pull-offs, and this is the secret of Nuno's fast playing. The string-skipped arpeggios are challenging at first, but keep at 'em – they're useful shapes that provide a gateway to shred.

Less is more

Jakub Zytecki

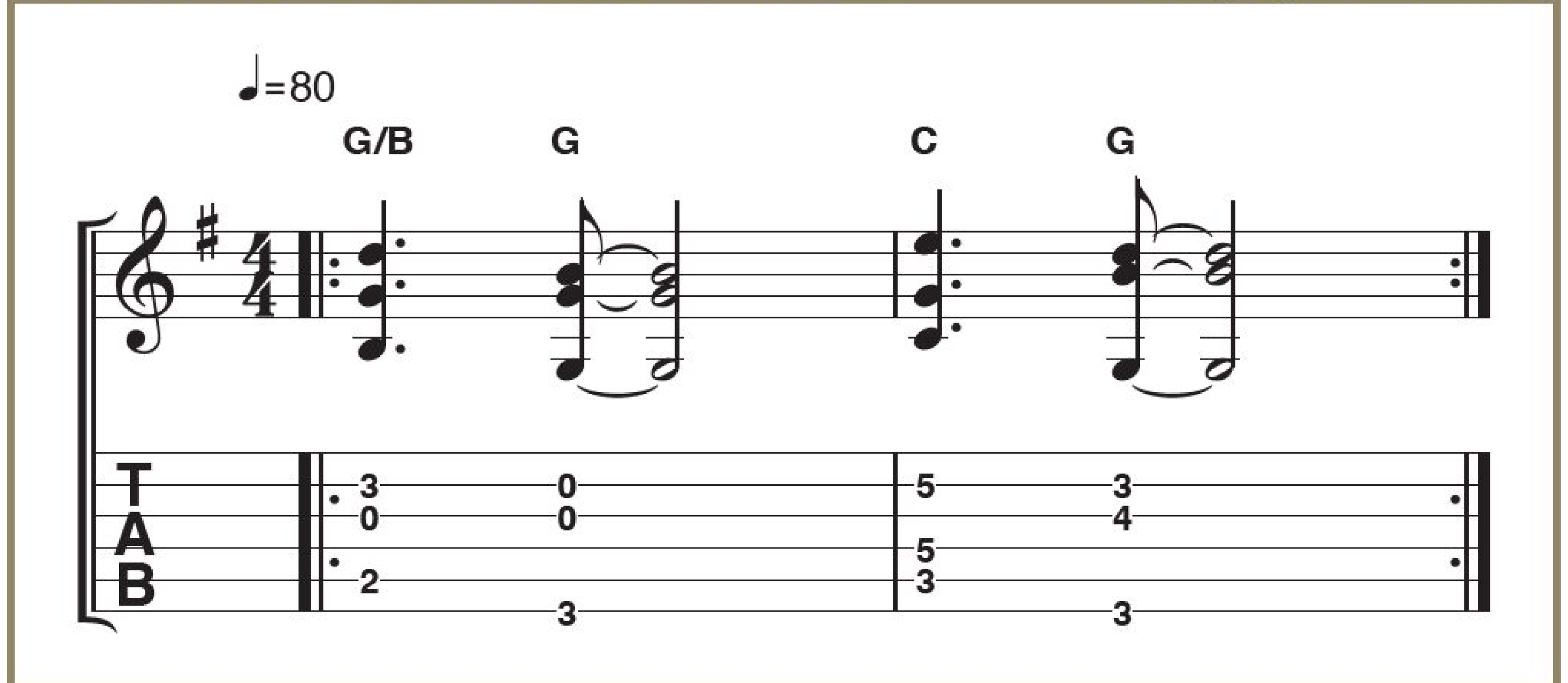
It's not a rule but, very often things sound better when there's less in the arrangement and in the mix. I feel like the more you deal with the creative process and the more you write, the more you tend to go towards minimalism. You're trying to say a lot, but through a minimal set of notes.

Playing slower

Richie Faulkner
Judas Priest

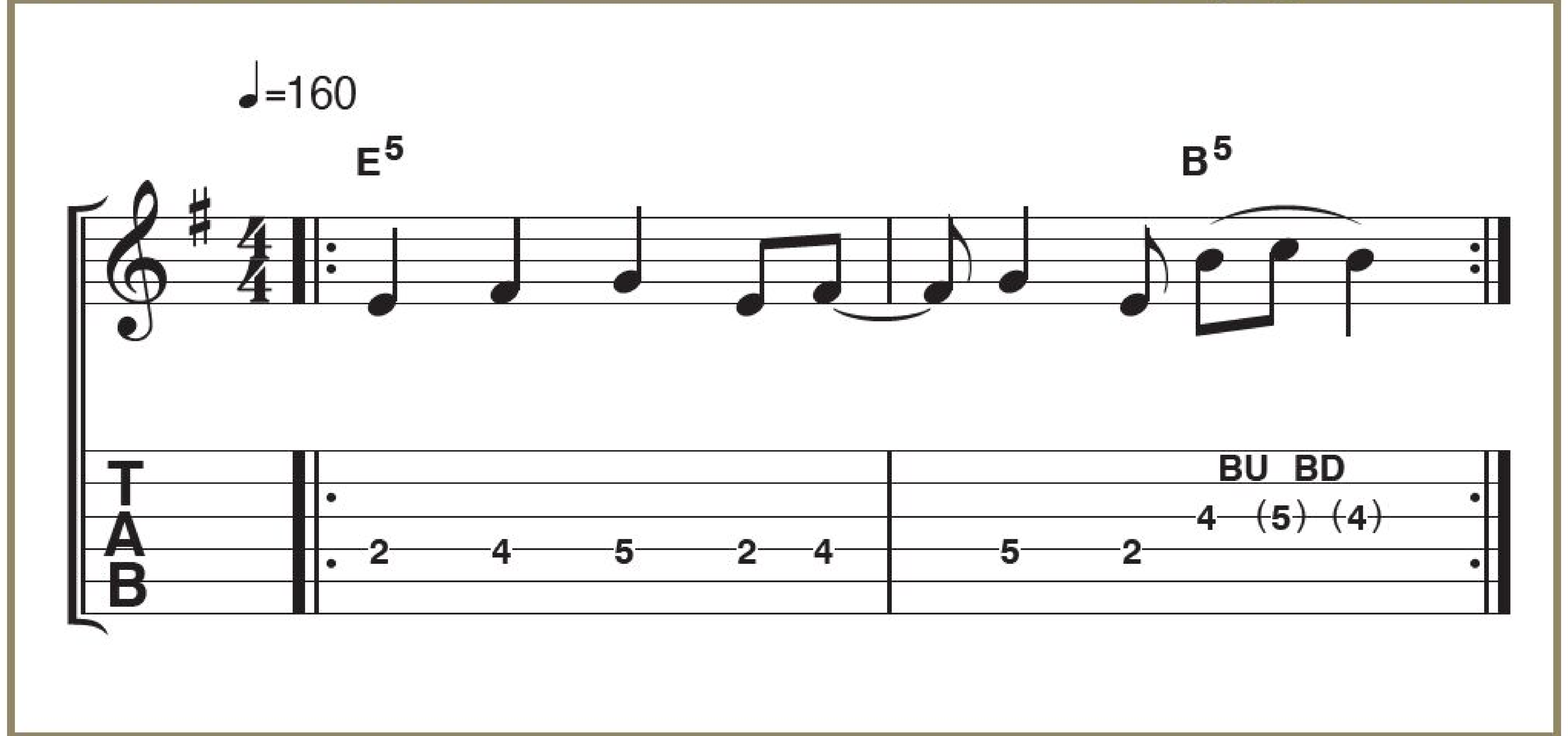
For me, it's always about what I'm saying, rather than how many notes I'm playing. Some of the best guitar players, or my favourite guitar players – like Michael Schenker, David Gilmour and Brian May – they've always been that kind of guitar player. Even Kirk Hammett of Metallica, who was a bit faster back in the day, always had some kind of motif you could latch on to and sing along to. That's something I always want to recreate. Your fingerprint comes across more when you slow it down and play some melodies, rather than a sh*t-ton of notes.

RIFF WITH "A MINIMAL SET OF NOTES" bit.ly/tg376audio



Our minimalist example is based on ambient tracks like *Grow Up*. Here we let the reverb and delay do the work. Some simple three-note chords are plucked with the fingers and the delay is set to the quarter-note pulse, which throbs along in time. This pattern can be built upon with more lead lines added and layered up.

HOOK-BASED RIFFING bit.ly/tg376audio



Our Judas Priest-inspired example runs with Richie's advice to creative strong melodies and hooks. It's the kind of simple, catchy riff you'll hear on Priest tracks such as *Breaking The Law*.

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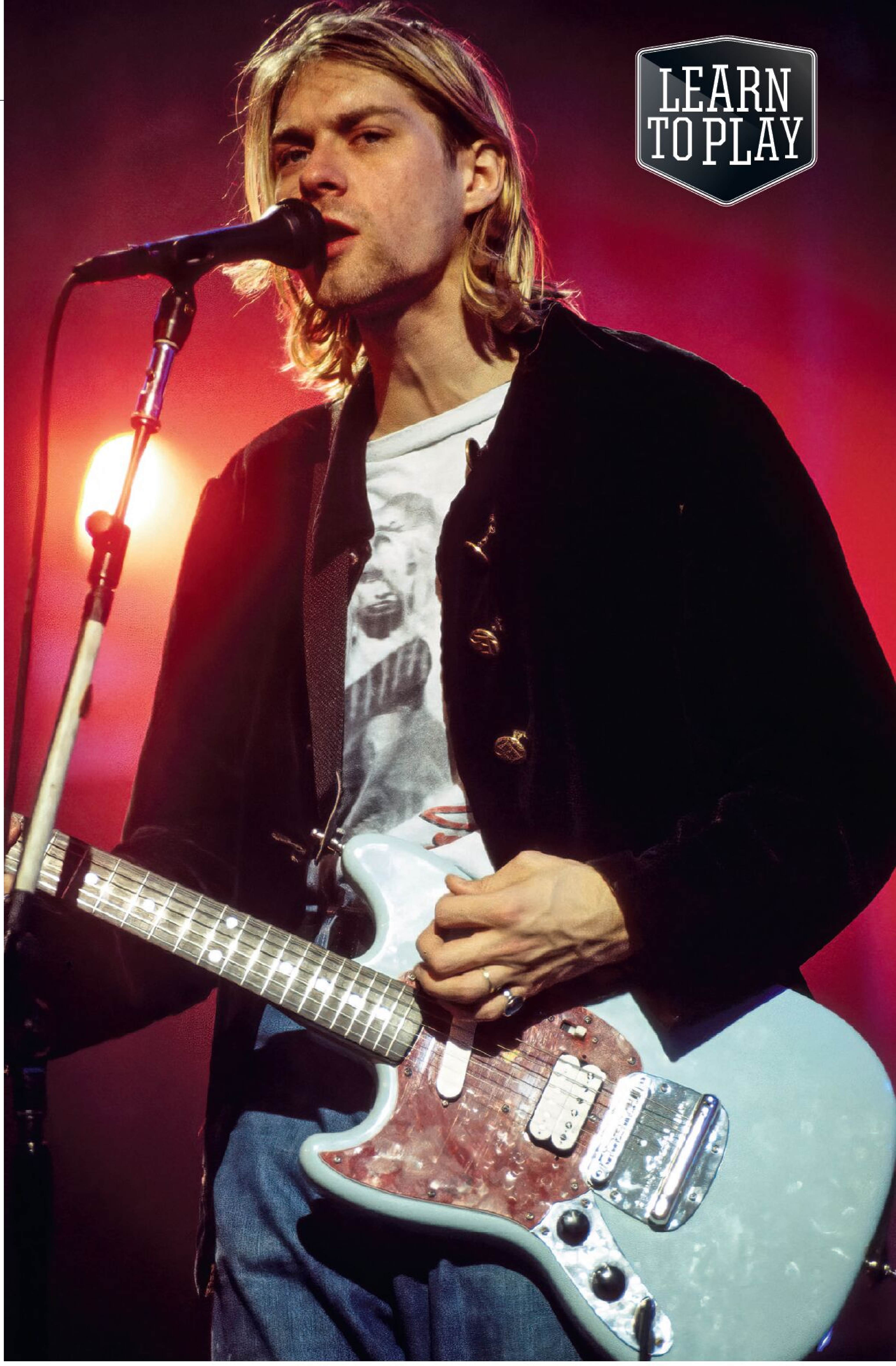


OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

NIRVANA
ALL APOLOGIES

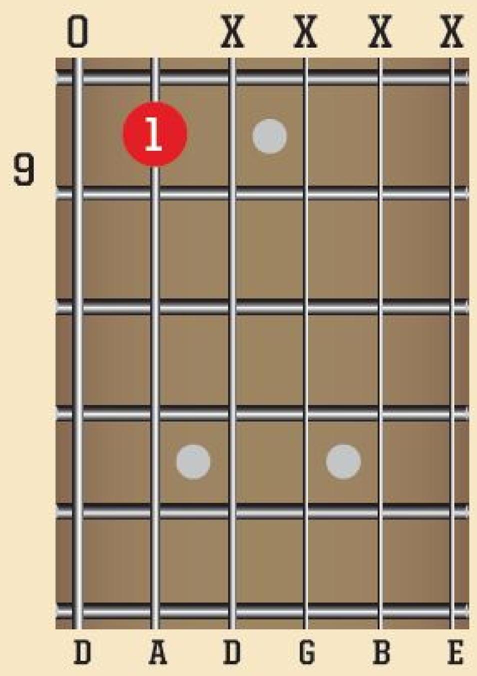
Drop your low E to D, dial in some distortion and make some noise with this grunge classic from 1993's In Utero

With much of the track following a riff and distorted powerchords, this classic from Nirvana's *In Utero* album may not be an obvious strummer. However, the implied chords are simple and it's an easy tune to jam around, with or without the riff. Not convinced? Check out Pat Smear's strummed acoustic accompaniment on the band's *MTV Unplugged* album and accompanying concert film.

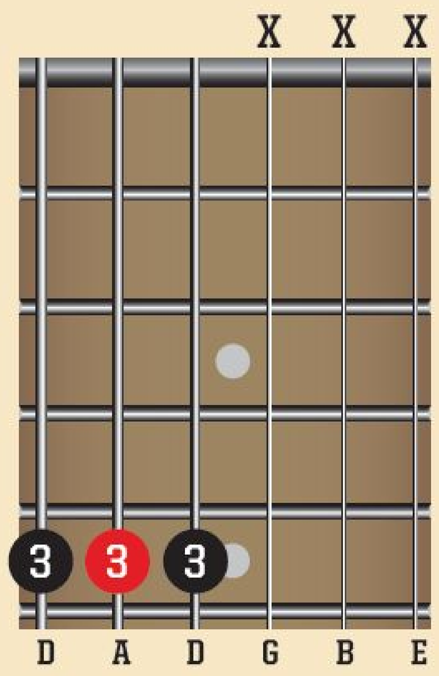
If you tackle All Apologies on electric guitar, Cobain was famously seen performing the (then unreleased) track with a Fender Strat at the band's legendary 1992 Reading Festival show. A neck position single coil pickup is suitable for the clean and distortion sounds alike – though you may prefer a more conventional bridge humbucker. Kurt's amps ranged from Randall and Mesa/Boogie heads, Crown power amps, a Fender Twin in the studio, and Marshall cabinets. He was also a pedal fanatic, the most-used on his 'board being the Boss DS-1 and DS-2 distortions and Electro-Harmonix Big Muff. We'd suggest using a Fender Twin Reverb for a basic clean sound and perhaps stacking Big Muff and DS-1 type distortions.

CHORDS

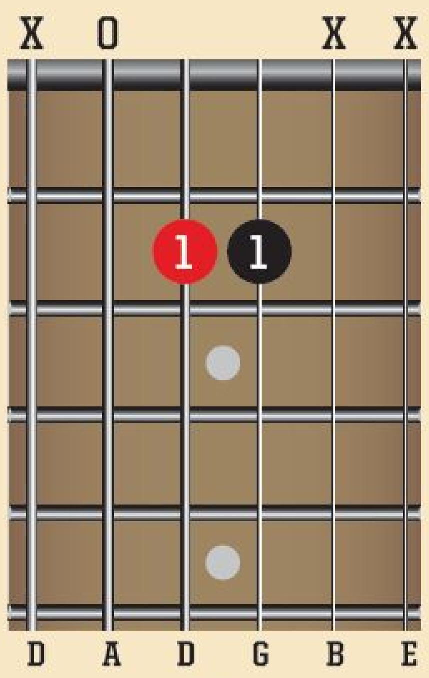
With much of the track outlined by the riff there are only a few chords to play. The D shown here is your start point for the riff, but you could strum an open D chord if you like. The part was played by Kurt on a drop C#-tuned guitar (C# G# C# F# A# D#). This is the same as drop D (DADGBE), but with all six strings detuned by one further semitone. We've kept our tab and song sheet in drop D for convenience.



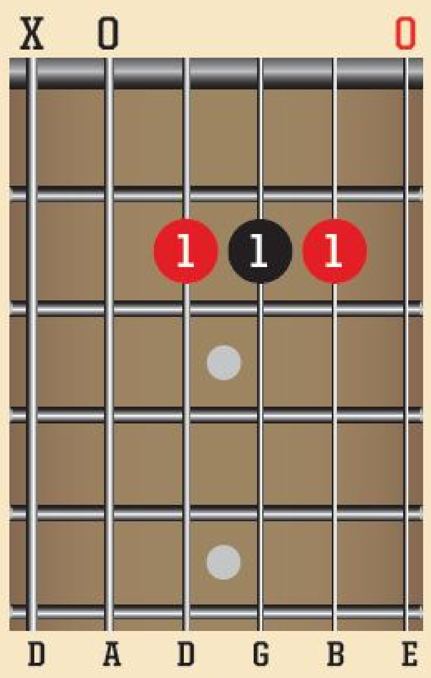
D



G5



A5



A

ALL APOLOGIES
Words and Music by Kurt Cobain
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Guitars and backing Milton Mermikides Photo Getty

SONGSHEET

ALL APOLOGIES

Intro
D / / / / / / /   x4

Verse 1
D
What else should I be?

All apologies

What else could I say?

Everyone is gay

What else could I write?

I don't have the right

What else should I be?

All apologies

Chorus 1
G5
In the sun

In the sun I feel as one

In the sun

In the sun
A5
Married

Buried

Verse 2
D
I wish I was like you

Easily amused

Find my nest of salt

Everything is my fault

I'll take all the blame

Aqua sea foam shame

Sunburn freezer burn

Choking on the ashes of her enemy

Chorus 2
G5
In the sun

In the sun I feel as one

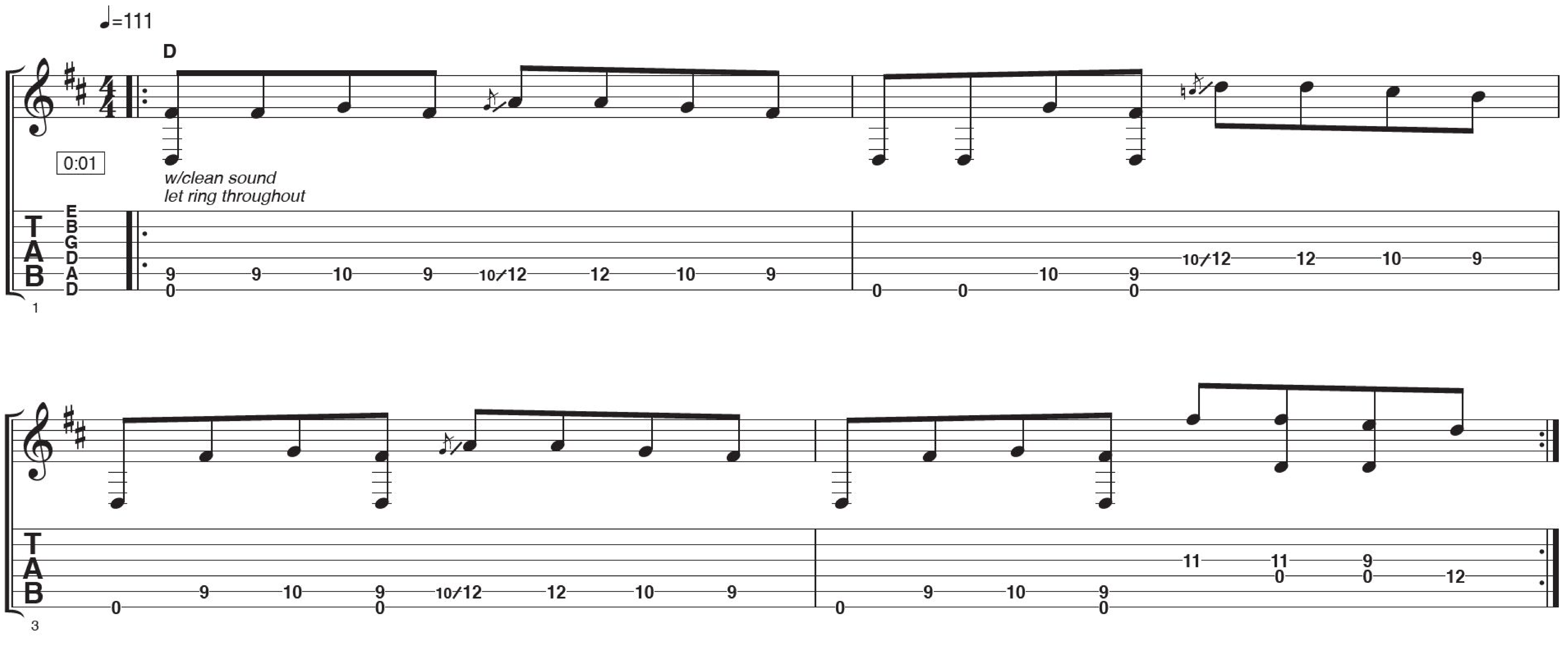
In the sun

In the sun
A5
Married
          A
Married
A5   A
Married
A5
Buried

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

Outro
D
All in all is all we are   (To Fade)

NIRVANA ALL APOLOGIES. Intro / verse



Nailing this intro section allows you to play most of the track. Take a look through the tab and identify the open-string bass notes to make sure you're hitting them at the right time. Try practising the line without the bass notes to begin with, and add them in later.

POWER PLAYER
Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong is a master of rhythm guitar

Words Jon Bishop

21 WAYS TO BETTER RHYTHM

Master different styles of music and improve your timing with our massive lesson

We've said this many times: the majority of most electric guitarists' performance time is spent playing rhythm – and, as such, it's pretty important to practise this aspect of your playing. Now, we don't want to bring up the thorny subject of what constitutes rhythm guitar, and, of course, the line between rhythm and lead is somewhat blurry. Suffice to say, here in our massive six-page tutorial, we're taking the broadest definition of rhythm guitar. Chords, picking, strumming, riffs, single-note accompaniments, various aspects of timing and more all feature here. There are 21 tab examples, complete with recorded audio tracks and guitar-less backing mixes to jam along to, courtesy of our UK sibling mag *Total Guitar*. Just hit the links in the heading for each style to find some useful accompaniment.With something for all styles of music, there's enough here to keep us all rocking until, well, until the next issue comes out!

01 DOWNPICKING: PUNK

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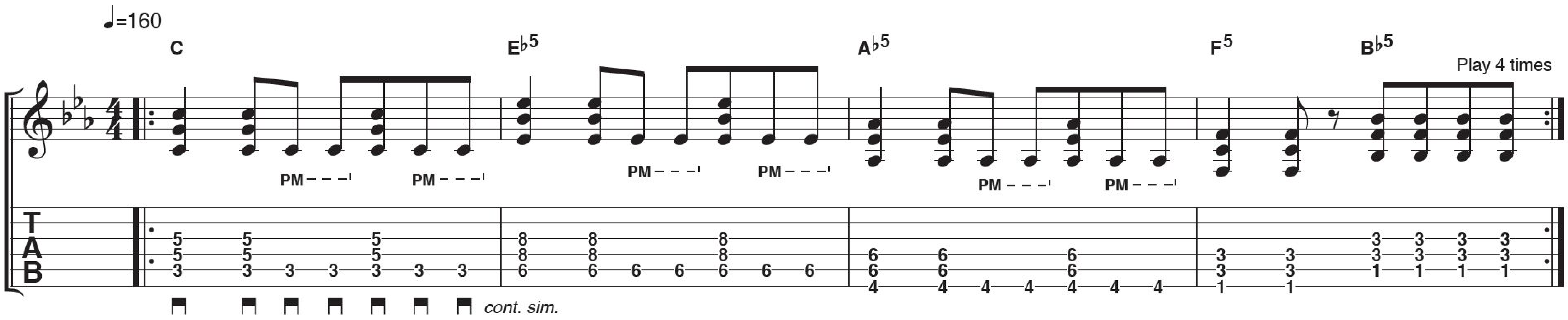

No surprises here! This example mixes up core punk ingredients of powerchords, palm muting and downpicking. At 160bpm, the tempo is fairly rapid, so you'll need a steady picking motion, keeping your movements as small and focused as possible. The thinner sounding palm-muted single notes contrast with the full chords and are a crucial punk rhythm technique. Think Ramones or Green Day and you'll be on the right lines.

02 DOWNPICKING: '80S THRASH

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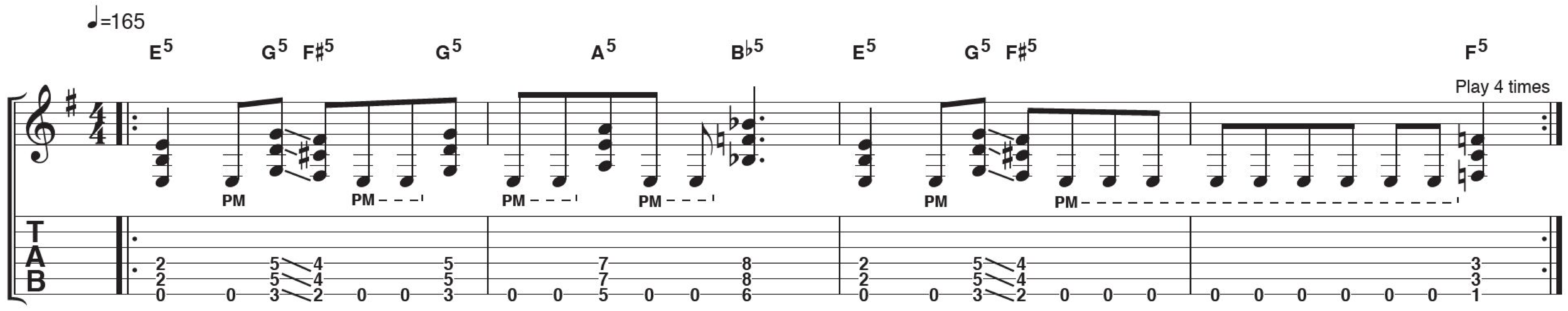
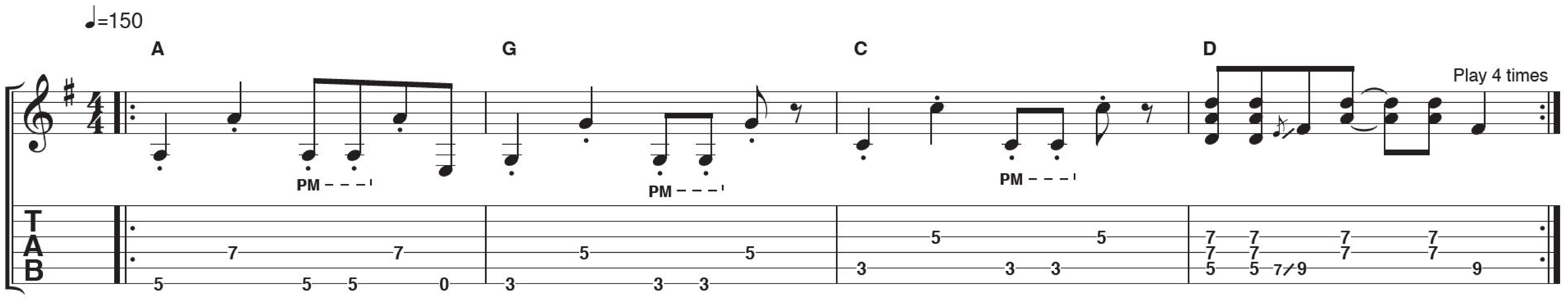


There are a lot of similarities between this example and the previous one, namely the fast tempo, and the downpicked palm-muted powerchords. Once again, that means taking care to emphasise the full chords against the single notes. Typical of thrash metal rhythm though, there's more distortion and the harmony is more complex than punk, with the B♭5 and F5 chords momentarily hinting at the Locrian mode.

03 DOWNPICKING: '00S GARAGE/POST-PUNK

bit.ly/tg377audio



The turn of the century saw a post-punk and garage rock revival, with acts like The Strokes and The Hives seeing major success. Our example exploits the octave interval, and downpicking is once again the order of the day. Dig in with a bridge pickup selected and a light overdrive tone. The sound of the guitar being hit hard and sending the amp into overdrive is more important than tickling the guitar with a higher gain setting.

04 FUNK CHORDS

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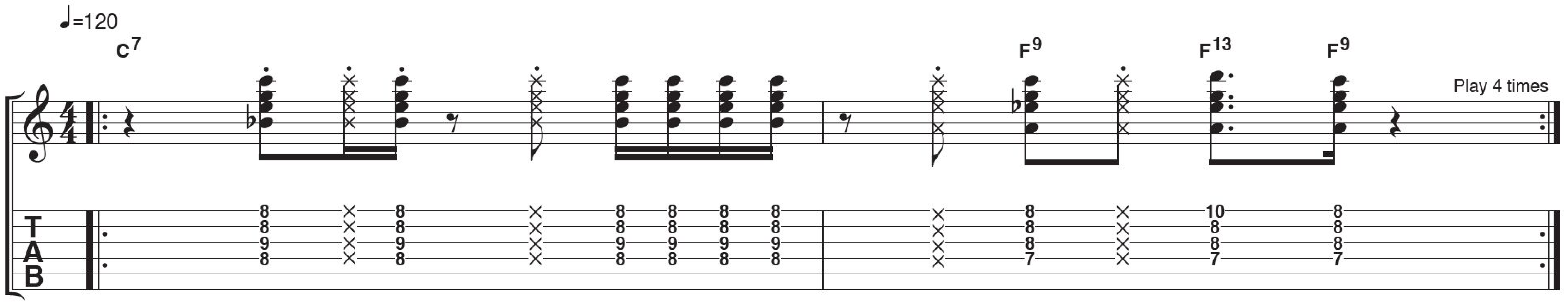

We're firmly in James Brown/Jimmy Nolen territory here, with trademark 9th and 13th chords (as heard in Brown's *Get Up...*) and super-tight 'in-the-pocket' timing. If you struggle with the rhythm, play fewer strums so that the timing is always your main focus. You can come back and perfect the riff later if you want to.

05 16TH-NOTE DISCO

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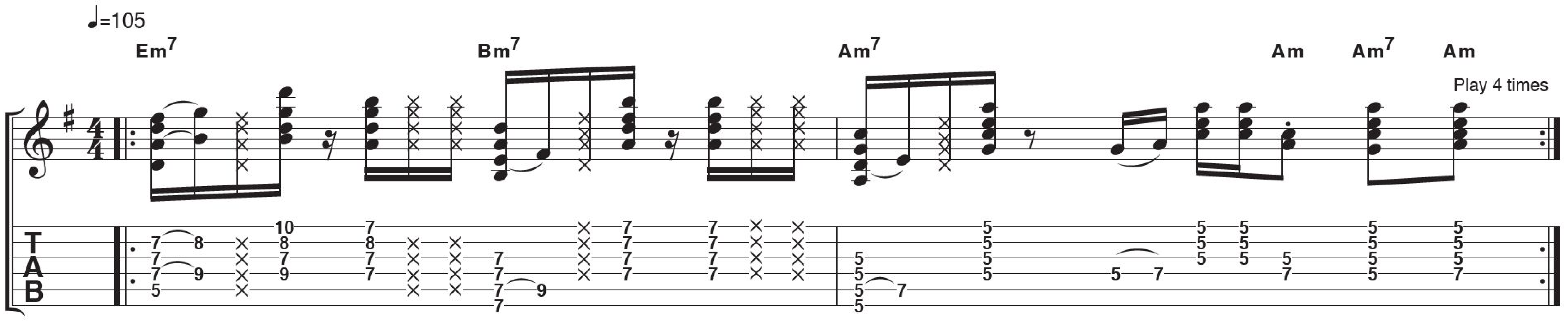

This example is inspired by legendary disco strummer Nile Rodgers, who has been a prolific hit machine since the '70s. For this one simply select a neck single coil, dial in a lively clean tone and strum those funky 16th-note rhythms. We recommend using a thin pick (Rodgers himself uses 0.5mm picks). The flexibility just gives a smoother stroke across the strings that suits the sound of the constant 16ths.

06 90S FUNK-ROCK STRING MUTING

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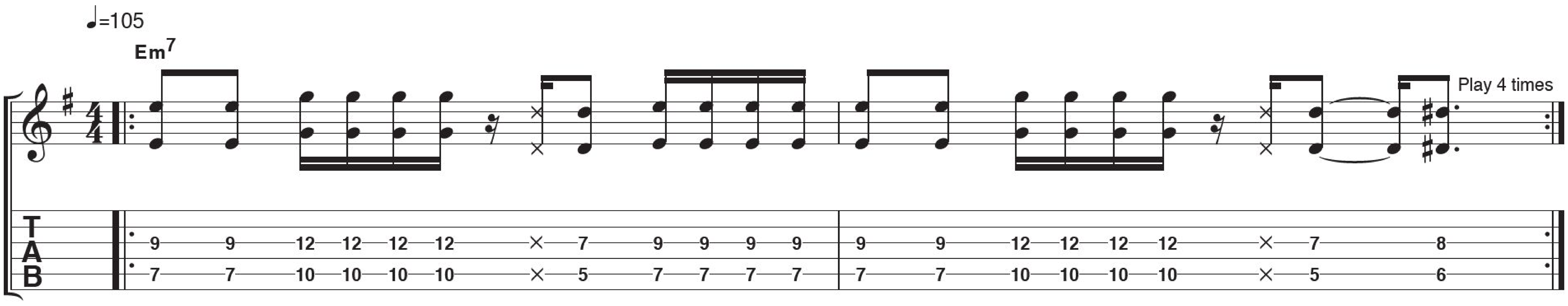

Here we're taking inspiration from funk-rock greats Jane's Addiction, Red Hot Chili Peppers and Rage Against The Machine with a combination of octaves and 16th-note strumming. The Chilis' John Frusciante has almost superhuman string-muting abilities (check out how he *strums* the two-string shapes in *Scar Tissue*). And though the shapes are different here, the principle is the same – so be sure to stub free fingers up against the idle strings.

07 JAZZ "VOICE LEADING"

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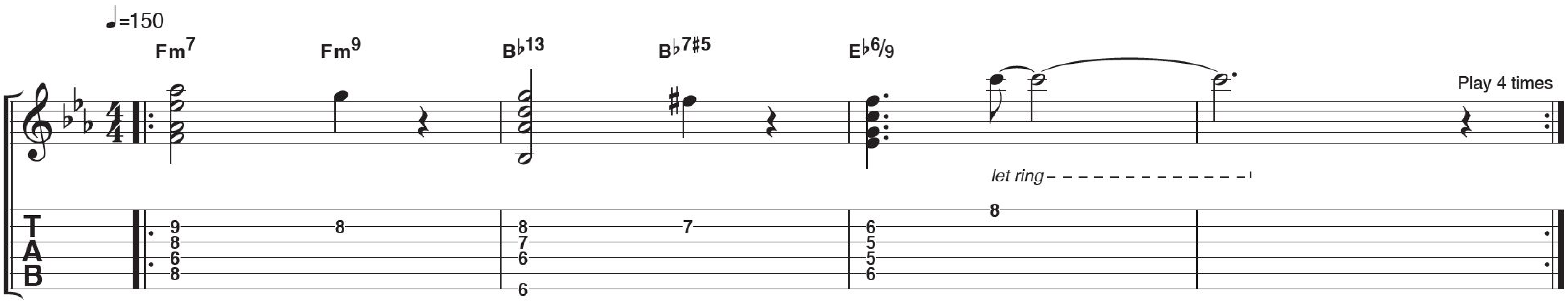

This is a concept whereby the top notes (though bass or middle work, too) of a chord progression act as a melody that leads into and implies the next chord. There aren't really any rules other than the need for your melody to catch your listener's ear. You can introduce new melody notes, or just let the chord tones form the tune. Check out our tab example and listen to Wes Montgomery and Joe Pass for inspiration.

08 ESSENTIAL FINGERSTYLE

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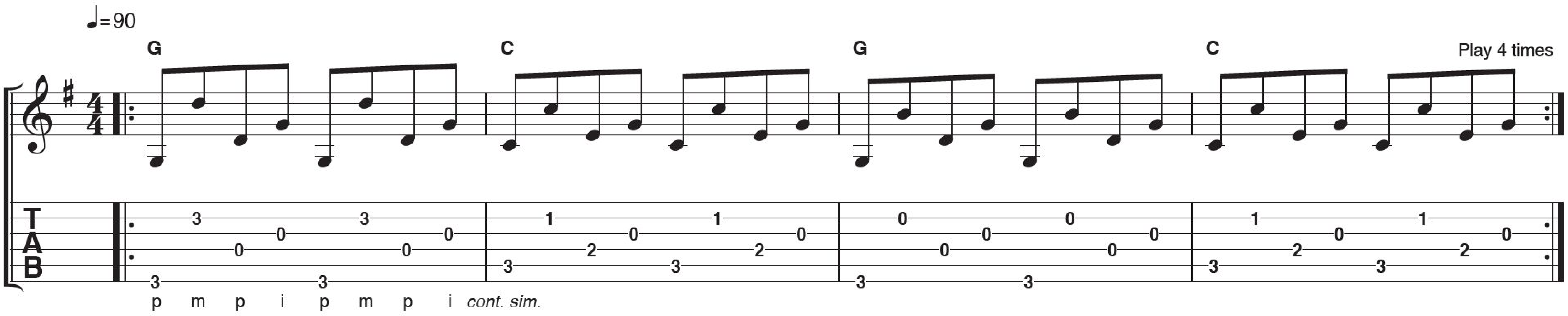

Our folk example combines a bassline with melody notes to create a flowing fingerpicked part. It's a commonly used picking pattern than can be applied to countless chords and progressions. Our advice is to spend time on the picking pattern, working with open strings first so you don't have to worry about the changes. When you've got it down, try applying it to as many chords as possible.

09 70S PENTATONIC ROCK

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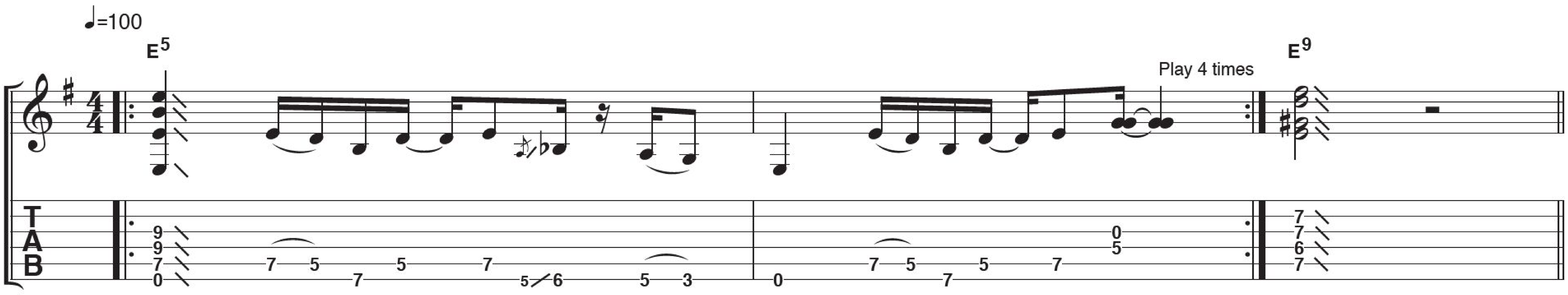

The next example is inspired by '70s supergroups such as Led Zeppelin and Bad Company. The E minor pentatonic scale provides a tried and tested canvas to create rock riffs. We've also included the ♭5th blue note (B♭) to add that dirty, blues rock flavour. The riff is repeated four times and finished off with a funky E9 chord.

10 80S ROCK

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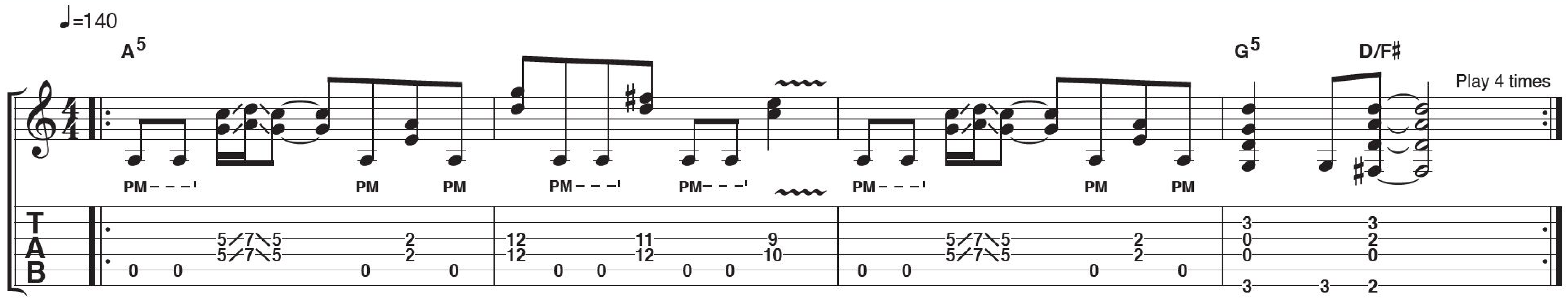
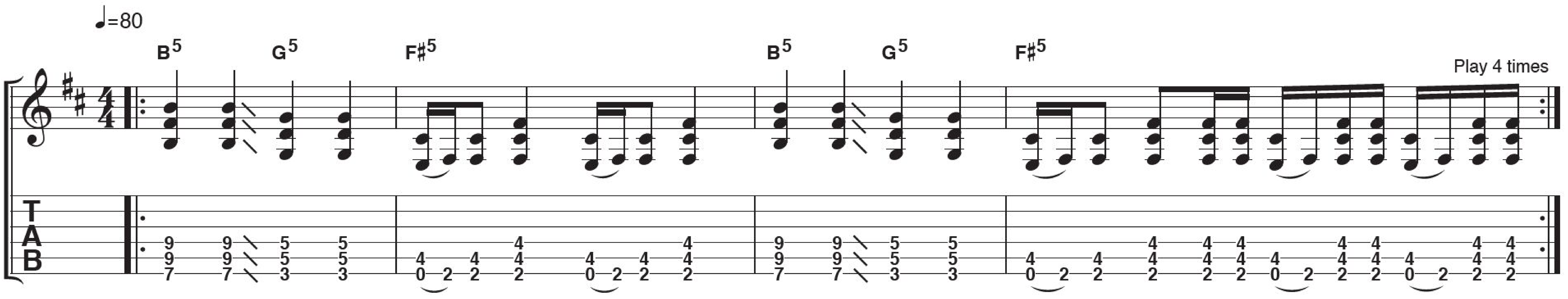


This example will help you play in the style of acts like Van Halen, Def Leppard and Bon Jovi in their '80s pomp. Notice how we're using the open fifth string as a repeating root note, with doublestops added on the third and fourth strings. Use palm-muting to keep the fifth string under control.

11 00S STONER METAL

bit.ly/tg377audio



For this example, we wind the tempo down and lay into those low register powerchords. We're in standard tuning here, but this is the kind of riff that'd work better played in a lower tuning or on a baritone guitar. D, C# or C standard are good starting points, or try out the "drop" equivalents where the sixth string is tuned down by a tone.

JIMI HENDRIX

A master of funk, rock and soul – and he even used jazz chords! Jimi Hendrix was a true all-round rhythm machine!

12 EXTENDED CHORD RHYTHMS

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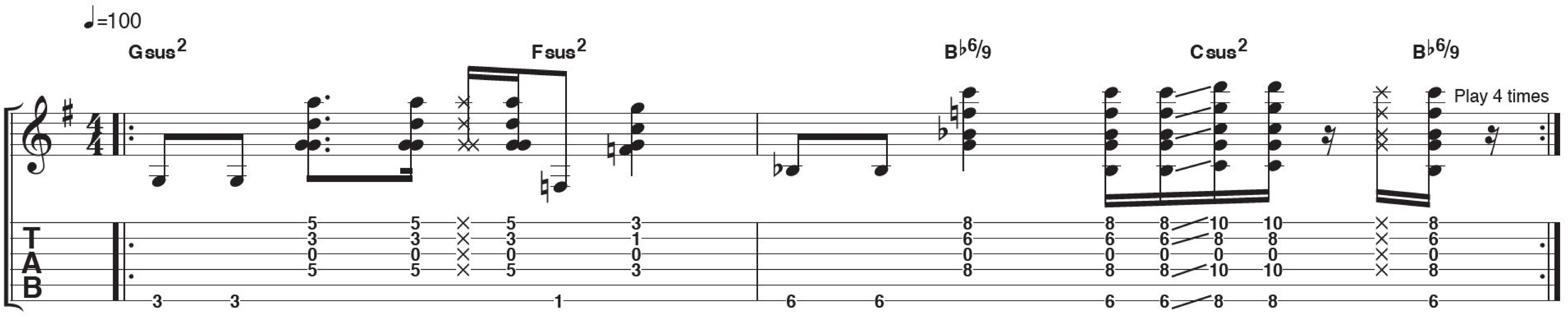
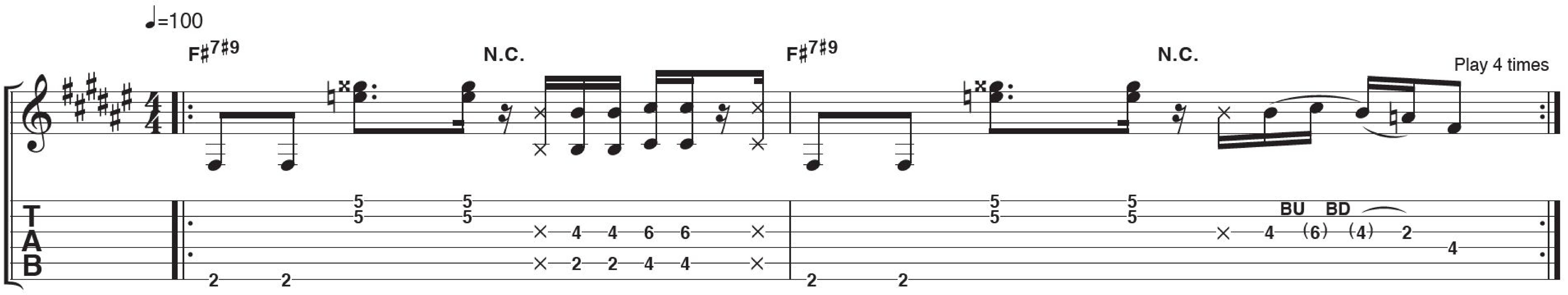


Our first Jimi-style example is inspired by songs like *Castles Made Of Sand* and *Angel*, and uses chords with a thumb-fretted root note on the sixth string. Another key aspect is the open third string which rings out against the moving shape sometimes in harmony and sometimes creating dissonance.

13 FUNK-ROCK

bit.ly/tg377audio



Our second example is inspired by tracks like *Foxy Lady* and *Voodoo Chile (Slight Return)*, and utilises the classic 7#9 "Hendrix chord" – a simple jazz voicing that Jimi made regular use of. Octave shapes and some 'in-between' lead licks complete the Hendrix package.

PRINCE

Multi-instrumentalist, multi-stylist, producer and one of a kind, Prince was the pop star who could do it all. We look at a pair of his rhythm tricks...

14 FUNKY CHORDS

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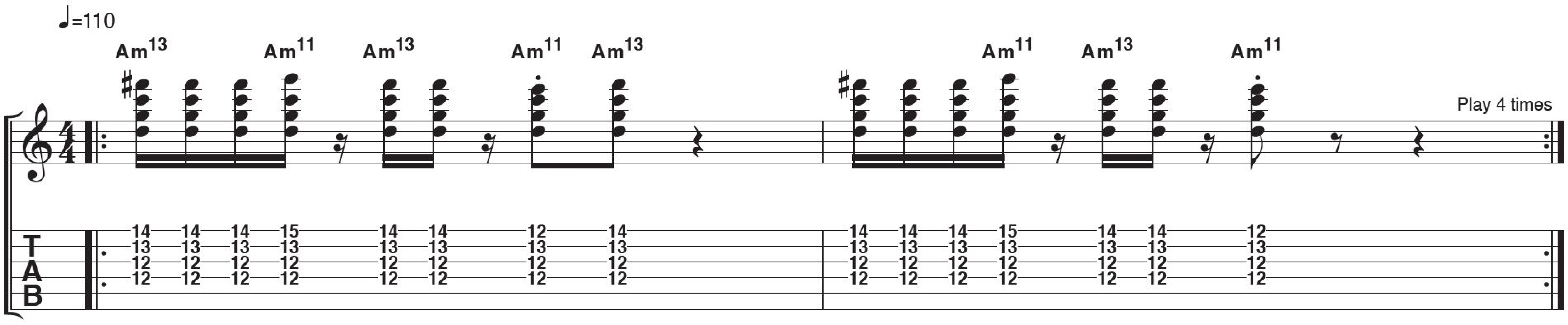
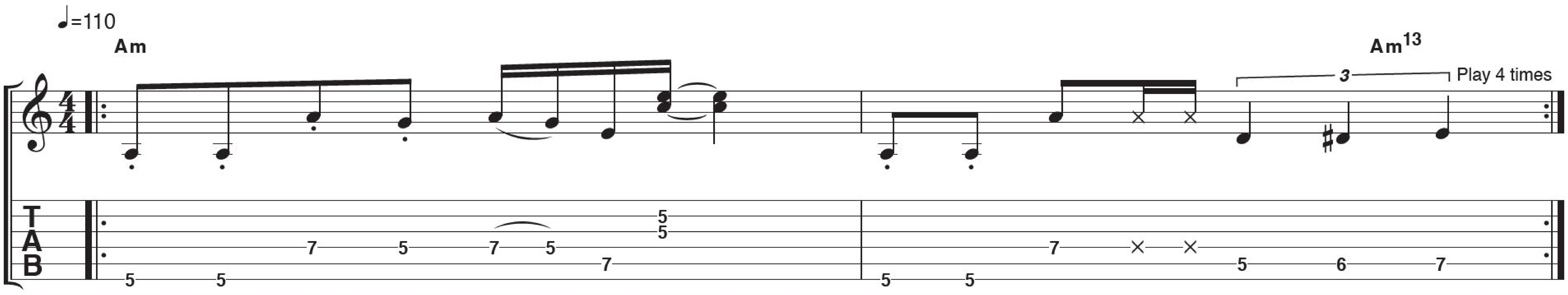


With pop, R'n' B and progressive soul all part of the Prince package, funk guitar techniques are a must. The Am11 and Am13 chords we've used are classic Prince-style fingerings. We'd recommend experimenting with a super-clean compressed tone without any reverb for that direct, dry funk sound.

15 ROCK RIFFS

bit.ly/tg377audio



For our second Prince-inspired example we head into the world of rock. Prince was a great rock guitarist and was no stranger to the overdrive pedal. We've used the A minor pentatonic scale (A C D E G) to create a chorus-style riff that would work alongside our previous funky verse example.

16 PROG METAL POLYRHYTHMS

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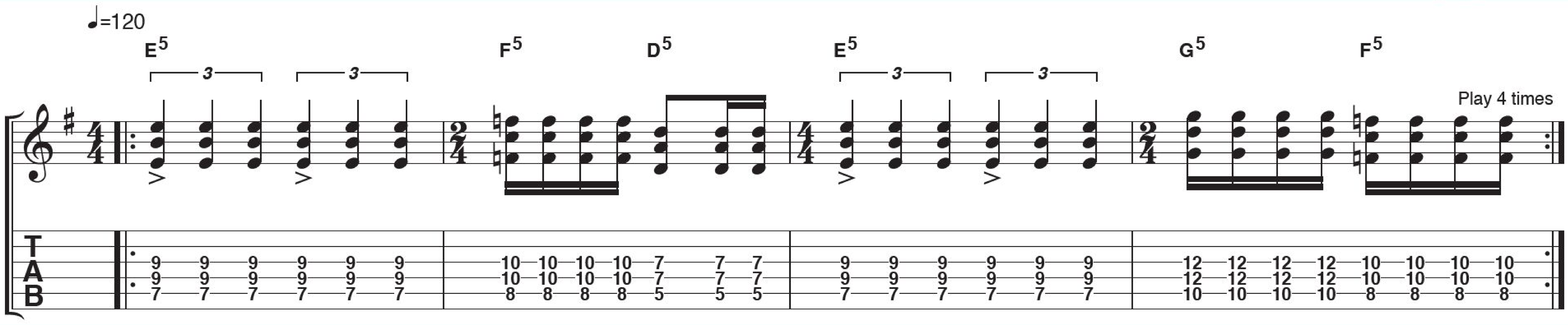

The '90s saw the worlds of prog and metal collide, with the rise of now-iconic bands Dream Theater and Tool, from whom we've taken inspiration here. Our riff uses a quarter-note triplet rhythm played against a straight eighth-note groove to set up a polyrhythmic effect. To maintain the prog factor we're swapping time signature every bar, so count to four, then two, then four, then two again to keep time.

17 DROP D ALT-METAL

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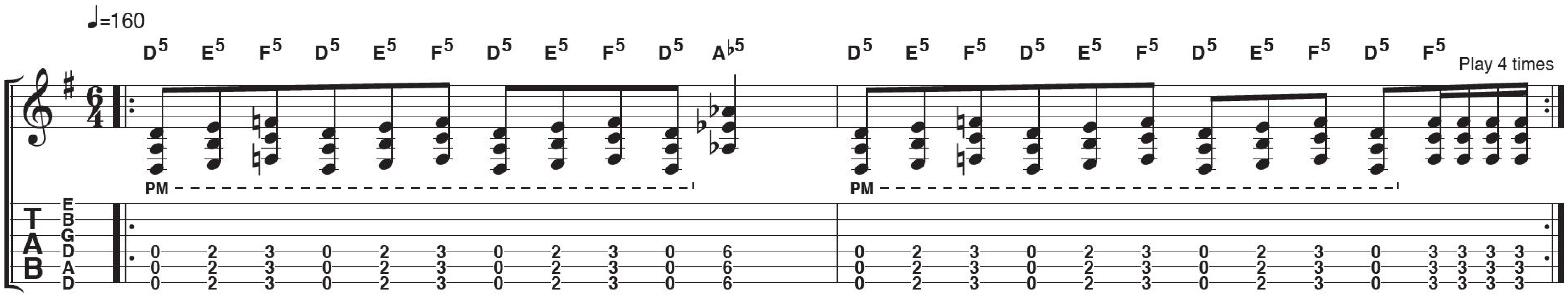

Think Soundgarden and Alice In Chains and you'll be in the ballpark here – the Drop D tuning has been used in tracks such as *Outshined* and *Them Bones* respectively. Simply drop your sixth string's pitch down a tone to D, dial in a chunky, high-gain tone and rock out with the one-finger powerchord shapes shown here.

18 CONTEMPORARY MATH-ROCK STRUMMING

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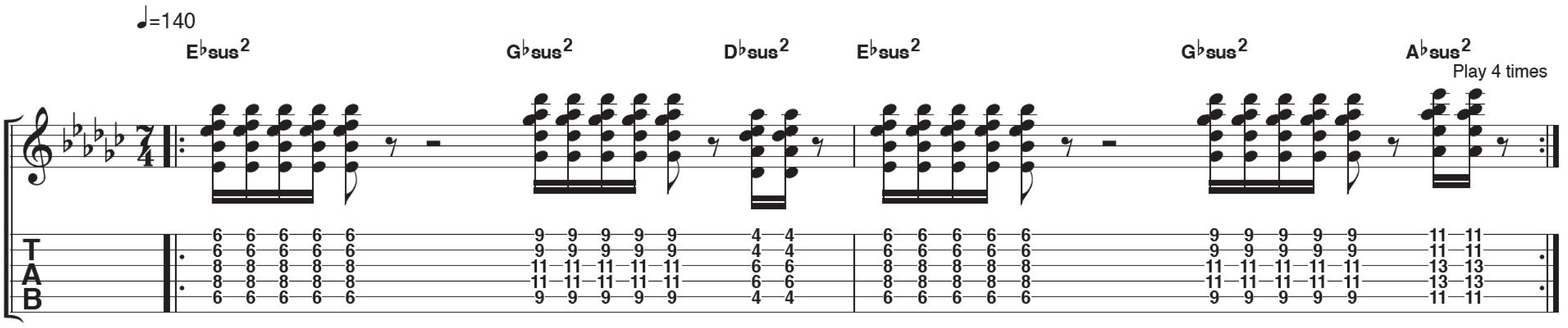
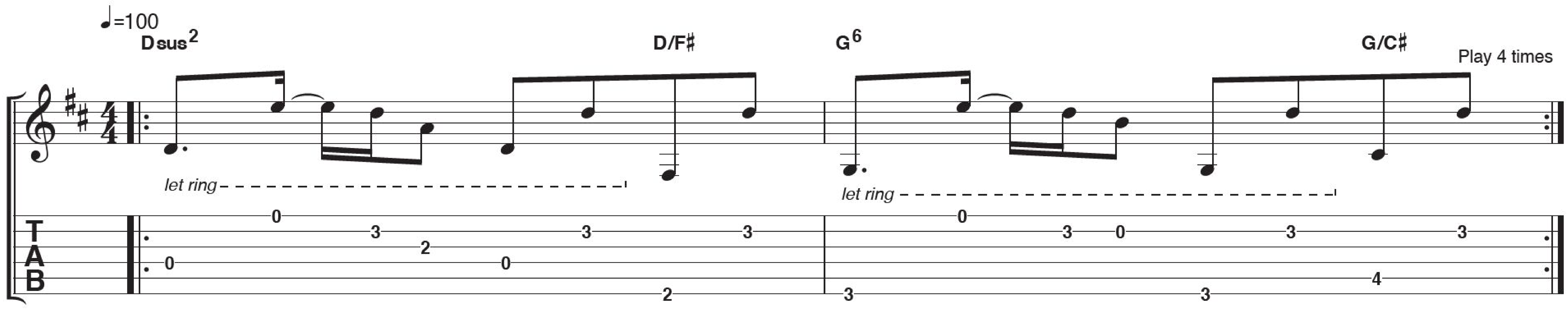


The last few years have seen math-rock evolving greatly, with virtuoso acts like Chon, Covet, Polyphia and Unprocessed treading new ground. We're keeping things simple here, taking a look at some simple chord playing in odd time – specifically 7/4. This means there are seven quarter-note beats in each bar. Aim to make the 16th note strumming snappy and tight.

19 '80S INDIE ARPEGGIOS

bit.ly/tg377audio



This '80s indie-style example is inspired by bands like The Stone Roses and The Smiths and exploits the chorus effect to add depth and lushness to the clean arpeggios. To emulate the sounds in our example you will need a chorus pedal and a good base clean tone. Try using an 'in-between' pickup setting (position 2 or 4 on a five-way Fender-style selector, or position 2 on a three-way Gibson unit) for some 1980s' indie jangle!

20 DANCE-ROCK ARPEGGIOS

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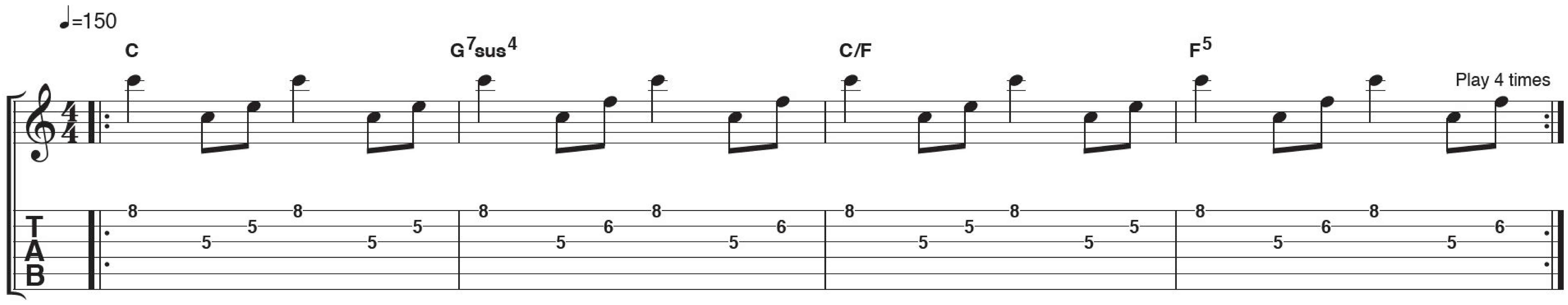

Delay and chorus effects are combined here to create a spacious, modern vibe. This works well on dance tracks and our example is inspired by bands like Bloc Party and Walk The Moon. This part is relatively simple to play and uses the trick of having the bassline change to provide a different harmonic context to the arpeggios, which remain the same.

21 CLASSIC DELAY

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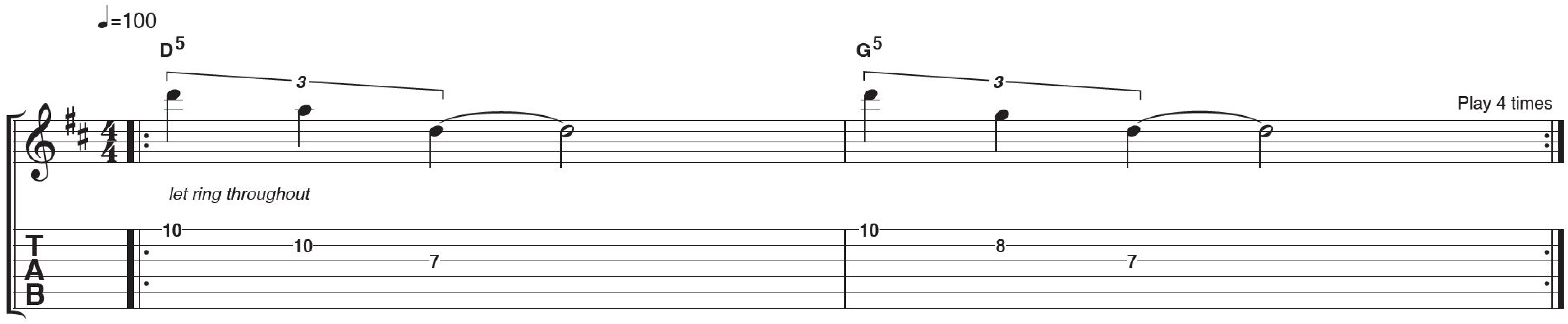

A delay effect can be used to superimpose rhythms into the guitar part. The optimum delay setting for this one is to have one delay with the repeats set to a dotted quaver and another set to a crotchet setting. Some modern delay units have this feature built in, which, though a useful shortcut, can be confusing. You'd tap a crotchet note pulse for the repeats to sound with a dotted eighth timing.

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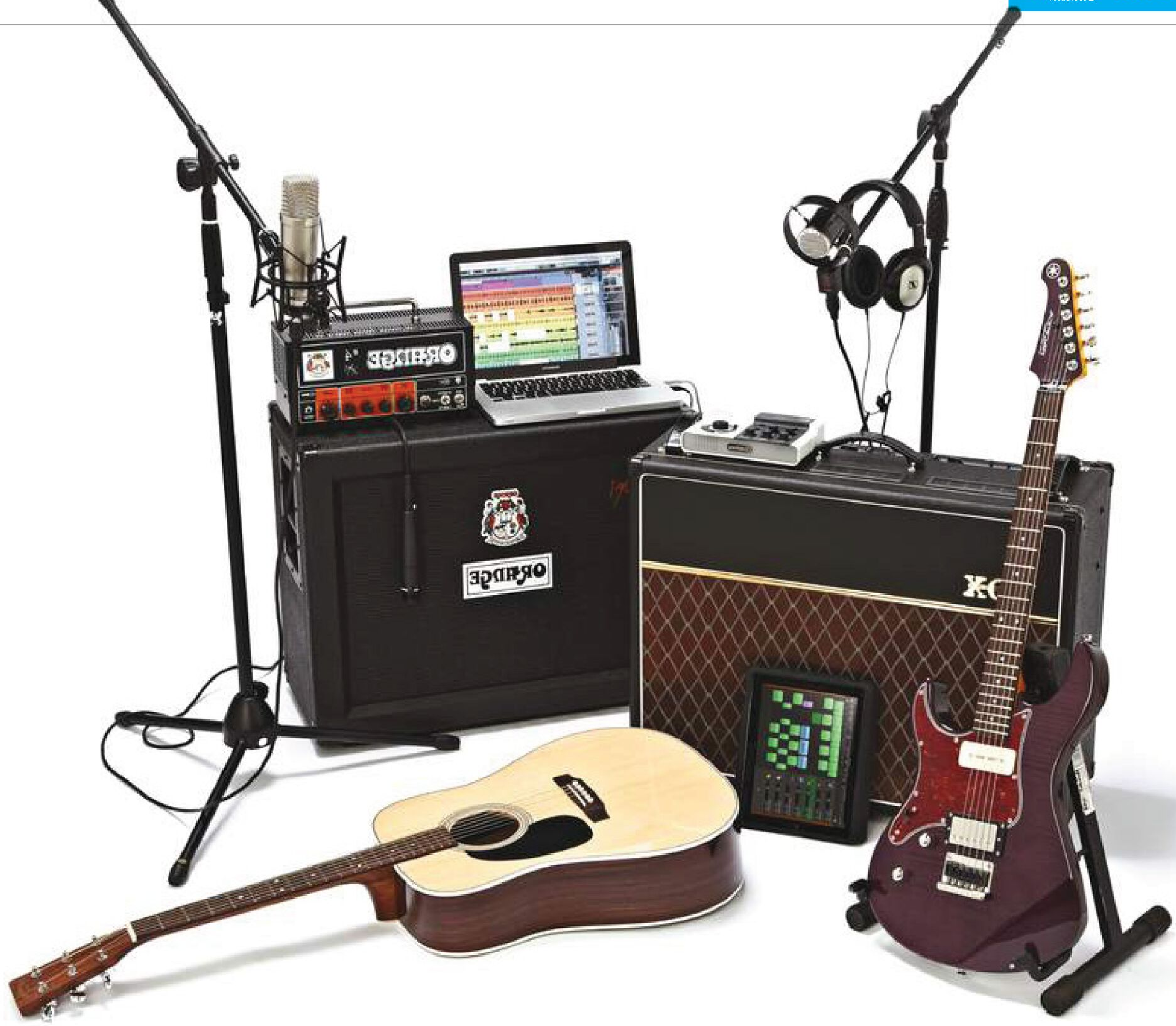

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Armed with only a mic, a computer and a DIY ethic, we'll show you how to record pro-sounding vocal tracks even in the most modest of environments.

Vocals, along with acoustic drum kits, are without doubt among the hardest musical components to record to a professional standard, particularly if you don't have access to a professional recording space. Yet they remain a vital element in a vast number of modern productions.

Recording singers and MCs used to be the preserve of full-blown commercial studios, with their dedicated vocal booths, rooms full of quality microphones and racks of high-end hardware processors. Nowadays, however, with some of the more affordable recording gear on the market, along with the sheer power of modern computers and just a little bit of DIY know-how on your part, it's perfectly possible to get release-worthy results without ever having to leave the comfort of your own home.

YOUR RECORDING SETUP

Before we begin recording, there are a few things that you can do to ensure that you get the best possible sound into your computer. These involve making some adjustments to your room, thinking about microphone position and minimising any unwanted noise so that it doesn't end up on the recording.

You'll want to get as clean a sound into the mic as possible to give yourself maximum flexibility when it comes to processing your vocal recordings. The most important thing to do is to hang blankets across the wall directly behind the singer (using tacks is probably the quickest way of doing this), which will dull down any reflections coming into the sensitive front side of the mic.

This is done to limit the amount of metallic-sounding room reverberation that gets onto the recording – it's always preferable to record as dry a signal as possible and add your own reverb later on with a plugin.

You should try to pick a room that's carpeted if at all possible, or if it isn't, at least put a thick rug around the area where the singer and mic are positioned. As well as floors, walls and ceilings, windows reflect a lot of sound, so make sure you draw the curtains, close the blinds or at least hang a blanket over any glass surfaces in your recording room.

In fact, any flat surfaces are your enemy in this regard, so if you've got lots of blankets, towels or bits of bedding lying dormant in your airing cupboard, trot them out and cover as much of the wall space as possible, as well as the tops of any tables, desks and the like. If you're short on such items, concentrate your resources on the area behind the singer's head.

If the room you're recording in refuses to be tamed with the above methods, you can always try recording with a large blanket suspended over both the singer's head and the microphone – this has the added advantage of preventing some of the reflections coming down into the mic from the ceiling.

However, you must make sure the blanket isn't touching either the mic or the stand, as this will cause any movement of the blanket to be heard on the recording.

PLACING THE MIC

Your mic should be positioned away from any walls and not too close to your workstation, as sound will bounce off these and be picked up on the recording.

Then again, you don't want to be right in the centre of the room either, as standing waves will play havoc with your recording. So, try to place your mic slightly closer to two of the walls than to the others, with the vocalist facing into the room and the majority of blankets (or whatever you're using) tacked to the walls behind the singer's head.

The optimum position is probably furthest away from your desk and any windows, but sometimes this isn't practical, so just try to minimise reflections as best you can.

How far vocalists should position themselves from the mic itself is entirely dependent on the material and their voice. A screaming metal singer should probably be at least a foot away from the mic, whereas a softer folk singer should be around four to six inches away. These are just guidelines, though, so feel free to record a few short test takes at the beginning of a session to ascertain the best distance for the particular track you're working on.

When recording a take, vocalists should aim to keep their heads as still as possible and not move their feet. It's also best to sing just off-centre into the mic, as most mics (depending on the pickup pattern) are extremely sensitive to direct sounds and any movement towards or away from the mic will be exaggerated from the centre.

An experienced singer will often move their head back a little during a particularly loud section and move closer for a quieter part, but unless your vocalist knows their craft inside out, it's best for them to remain as still as possible.

WORD OF MOUTH

A pop shield is a must, as it will reduce the loud plosive sounds of words beginning with 'b' and 'p' (caused by the singer emitting a blast of air). This will in turn help you out a great deal when it comes to the processing and mixing stages.

Pop shields aren't all that expensive to buy, but if you're on a really tight budget, opt for the classic homemade solution of using some old nylon tights stretched around a frame made from a coat hanger. Failing that, a kitchen sieve will also do a reasonable job.

Another thing to watch out for is the proximity effect, where the bass frequencies will be wildly accentuated if a singer moves their mouth to within a couple of inches of the mic.

Therefore, if you're recording someone who keeps creeping forward during a session, try adjusting the distance between the pop shield and the mic so that they physically can't get close enough to fall prey to this effect.

"A POP SHIELD IS A MUST, AS IT WILL REDUCE THE LOUD PLOSIVE SOUNDS OF WORDS BEGINNING WITH 'B' AND 'P', CAUSED BY THE SINGER EMITTING A BLAST OF AIR"

SCREENING FOR NOISE

One additional option is to use an add-on screen that fits onto your mic stand and encloses the space around the back half of the microphone, such as the Aston Halo, Reflexion Filter or Primacoustic VoxGuard. These enclose the space around the back half of the microphone, preventing some of the room reflections from entering the mic from this angle.

They can be relatively pricey, however. Alternatively, hanging a large blanket down from the ceiling or moving a tall piece of furniture (in turn covered with a blanket) behind the mic will help you get a drier sound into the computer.

Lastly, try to minimise any unwanted sounds that may ruin a recording. If your computer's cooling fan is quite loud, for instance, think about buying a few extension cables and moving your machine outside the room or at least as far away from the microphone as possible.

And, more obviously, close all windows and doors, turn off any electrical equipment you aren't using and place a 'Recording' sign on the outside of your door if you live with people who may accidentally come in and disturb you!

AND ON THE SOFTWARE SIDE...

Your computer setup is obviously vital to recording a good vocal sound. First of all, you need the best audio interface you can afford, as this will have an impact on the overall quality of the signal being recorded. The two main things to consider are the preamps and whether or not you require phantom power (note that all condenser mics need either phantom power or an internal battery, whereas dynamic mics and the majority of ribbon mics do not).

In the past, engineers often used hardware compressors to ensure that vocal signals didn't

clip. However, these have largely been made redundant for this purpose by 24-bit recording, which provides enough headroom to capture both very loud and very soft signals more than adequately. Remember that you don't need to have the loudest signals at the upper limits of your interface's input meters – in fact, with 24-bit recording, it's usually wise to keep the loudest sections around -12dBFS.

If your system can only capture signals at 16-bit, however, you'll need to set your levels a little more carefully, otherwise very quiet signals could be masked with noise and hiss.

You should aim to have the signal level peak at around -6dBFS to provide you with a decent margin of error, just in case your vocalist accidentally moves closer to the microphone at the wrong time and ends up with a clipped signal, for example.

Then, if there are some particularly quiet moments in your track, you can always try recording them as separate takes and adjusting the input gain accordingly.

Next you need to consider the buffer size setting in your DAW, as getting this wrong can cause problems with latency. With lower settings, the latency between a vocal line being sung and being heard back in the headphones will be minimal, although if it's too low, the backing track and vocal recording may glitch every now and then.

With higher settings, playback glitches should be eradicated, but the delay between singing a line and hearing it back in the headphones might be off-putting. Therefore, you need to get the buffer size as low as possible without causing any glitches.

TESTING, TESTING...

Before we move on, there are a couple of other things to bear in mind. First of all, you need to create a good monitor mix, where the vocals can be clearly heard above the backing but are not so loud that they mask the other instruments, as this will make pitching near enough impossible.

Also, for songs where the vocals come in before any tuned instruments, you should place a piano note before the start of the section to give you a starting pitch. And if there are any sections where the instruments drop out completely, you may need to make a dummy backing track to enable the vocalist to hear the rhythm and key of the tune – this can then be taken out again once the vocals are in the can, so to speak.

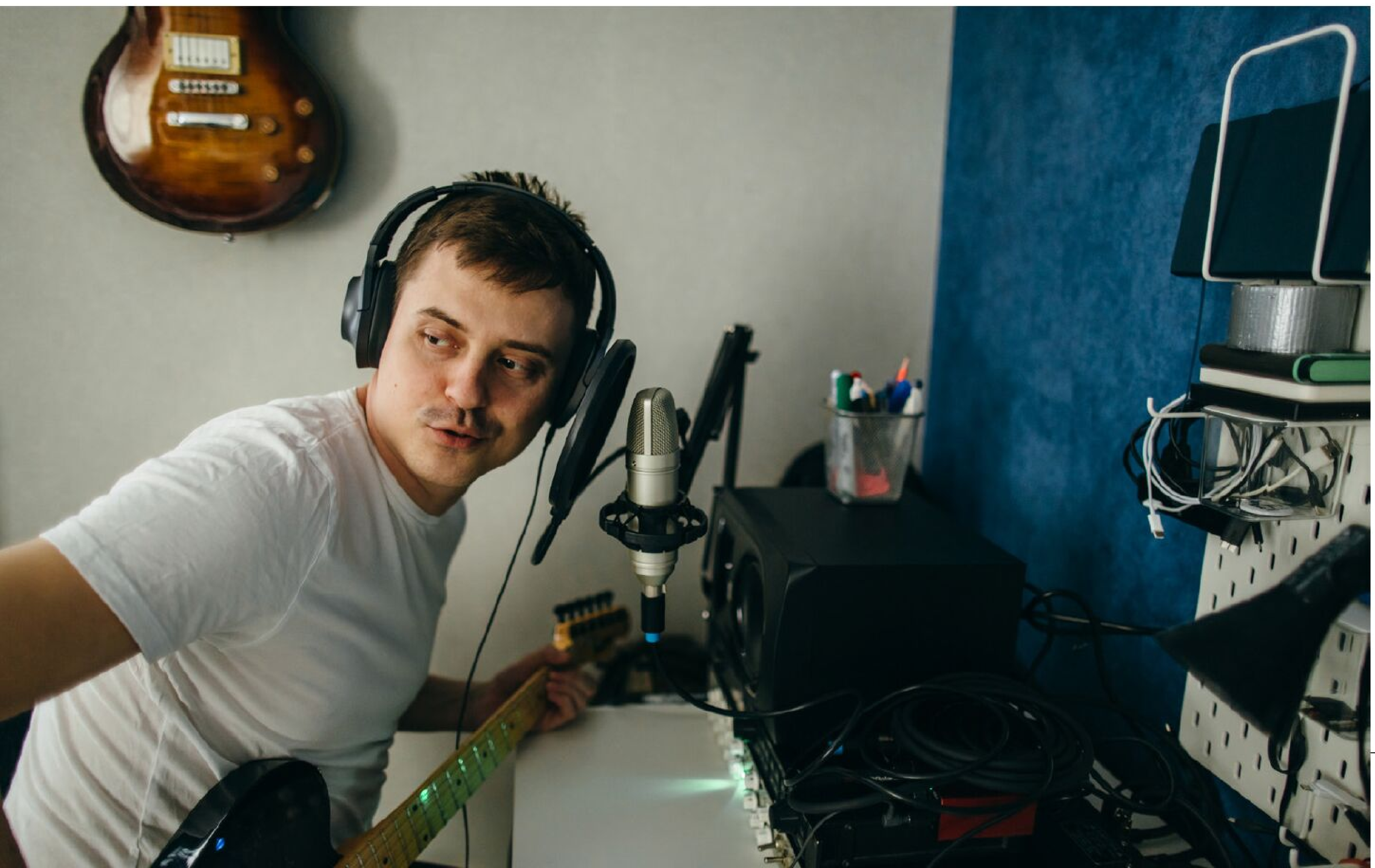
You'll often see singers in the studio wearing studio headphones with one ear off. This enables them to hear the backing track and the recorded vocal in one ear while still being able to hear their natural voice in the other. They also tend to use closed-back headphones, which help to stop the backing track leaking onto the vocal recording.

Of course, the most important thing is the performance itself, so disregard all of this information if another method will give you a better performance at the expense of some audio fidelity.

And when all is said and done, these rules can be broken. If you listen to Christina Aguilera's 'Beautiful', for instance, you can actually hear the drum track leaking from her headphones at around 3m 45s, but the producer decided to keep this take because the performance was so good.

Bono has been known to record his vocals with the band playing in the same room to help him give a more energetic take, and original Asian Dub Foundation vocalist Master D was known to monitor his takes through speakers to help achieve his impassioned delivery...

GETTY



RRP: $1,099

Shure GLXD16+ Dual Band Digital Wireless Guitar Pedal System

Ditching the cable has never been more attractive with this fuss-free pedalboard-friendly system. Review by **Paul Riario**

Shure needs no introduction as an unparalleled leader in audio innovation and as the industry standard in microphones and guitar wireless systems for live performances. Outside of their renowned microphones, Shure's touring-grade wireless systems have always been priced slightly out of reach for most non-professional guitarists and bassists.

But now, Shure aims to change all that with the rollout of their new GLXD+ Dual Band Digital Wireless System, which is available in rack-mount, tabletop and guitar pedal receiver versions.

Of course, this wireless system applies to vocalists and presenters as well, with a wide selection of lavalier, headset and handheld microphone options. But as a six-stringer, I'm here to focus on the pedalboard-friendly GLXD16+ Digital Wireless Guitar Pedal System, which has not only given me untangled freedom in my gigging life, but I believe it to be a frontrunner for its rugged reliability, ease of use and crystal-clear signal transparency.

Housed in indestructible metal enclosures, the GLXD16+ guitar pedal receiver and transmitter (with a locking 4-pin mini connector Neutrik cable) are designed to work seamlessly for players who favor a wireless system integrated within their pedalboards. What makes Shure's GLXD+ range unique is that it capitalizes on doubling available bandwidth with its Dual Band system that operates in the license-free 2.4GHz and 5.8GHz bandwidths.

The result of this remarkable technology is it removes all guesswork by automatically scanning for and selecting the clearest available frequencies to prevent any signal interference and dropouts.

The guitar system also addresses improved battery life by offering up to 12 hours of operation (with its included lithium-ion battery that can be conveniently charged via USB-C from the transmitter), and even more imperative in times of a gig crisis – it can provide 1.5 hours of use from a 15-minute quick charge, which should last longer than your setlist.

In addition, the pedal receiver includes a tuner (with needle and strobe modes) and a 1/4–inch input (for cabling in) and operates on 9V DC power. And in case you're wondering, two or more transmitters can be linked to the receiver, allowing for uninterrupted instrument swaps.

From setup to play, what makes the GLXD16+ so damn appealing is that it's done within seconds. With the receiver active and the transmitter fully charged, simply turn on the transmitter till the green LED flashes, and presto! – you're up and running with a clean signal, which to my ears, sounds clearly enhanced.

You can monitor battery life from the receiver's battery meter (even if you get to the last LED, you still have 30 minutes of playing time), and if you need further adjustments there are buttons for Mode, Channel and Group.

The tuner is super-accurate and can be set for mute or always-on, and the system allows for locking the receiver to save changes you've made. There's much more, but hell, I've already made this my go-to wireless system.

▶ VERDICT

With a pain-free setup and operation, up to 12 hours of battery life, super-tough build and pedalboard-friendly format, the GLXD16+ is a no-brainer for those looking to ditch the guitar cable.

▶ PROS

- Setup is easy and quick.
- Well-built and pedalboard friendly.
- Battery life is decent and clearly monitored.
- Quick charge offers 1.5 hours from 15-minute charge.

▶ CONS

- Nothing unless you love cables.

▶ CONTACT

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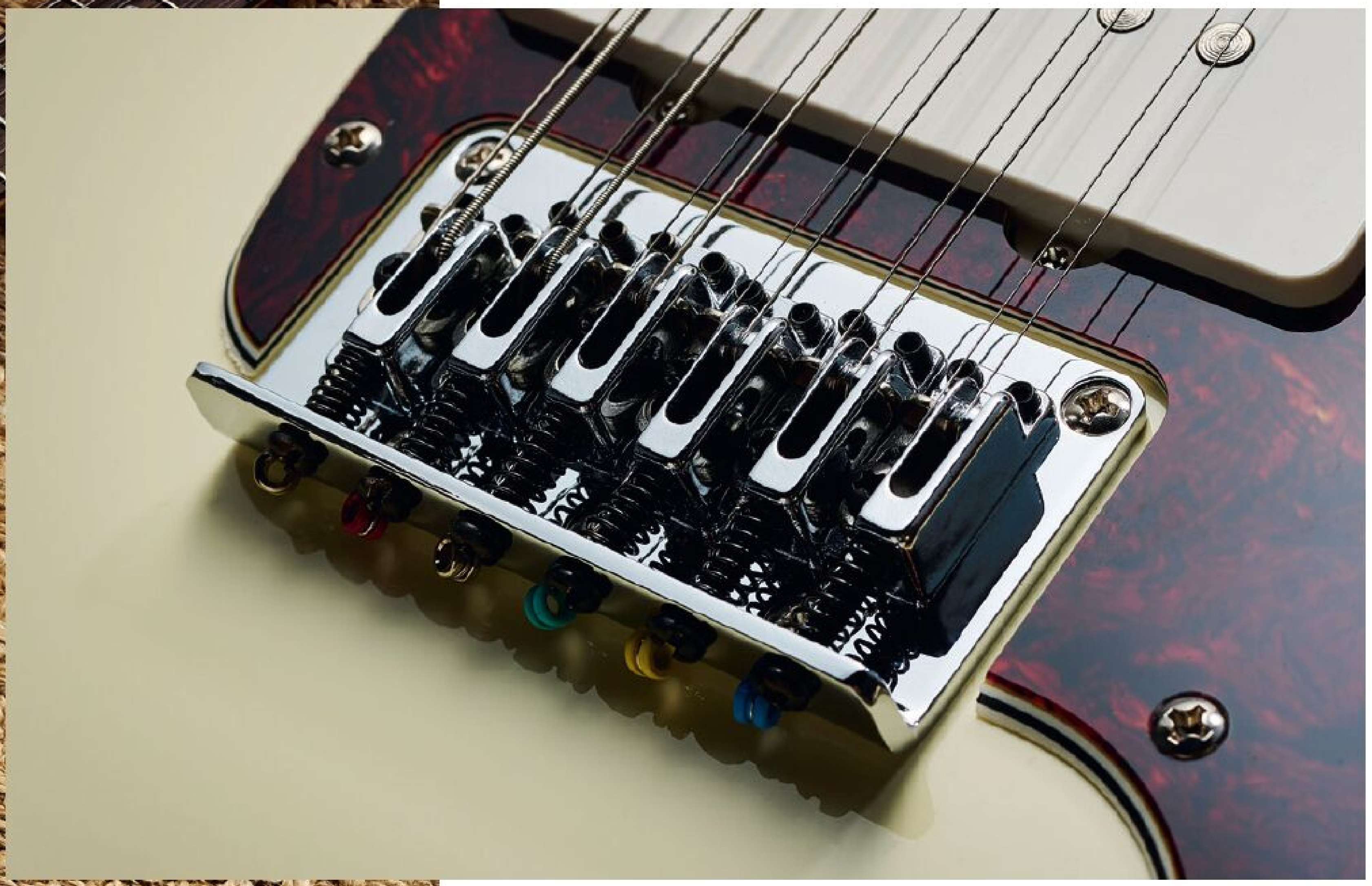

Squier Paranormal Jazzmaster XII and Squier Paranormal Custom Nashville Stratocaster

Leave your preconceptions at the door because some of the most interesting guitars to come out of the Fender stable in 2023 could well say Squier on the headstock. Review by **Stuart Williams**

If there's one thing that has changed at the more affordable end of guitar brands' offerings over the last decade or so, it's choice. Formerly the reserve of those willing – or maybe even at times begrudgingly – to pay more in order to get closer to the spec they wanted, the import guitar boom has well and truly busted down the door, behind which sit countless options.

That's a space occupied by Squier's Paranormal series. Since its introduction, it has not only given us affordable versions of Fender's more leftfield designs, but it's also created its own reimagined, mashed-up and experimental guitars. For some players, the Squier name holds certain preconceptions, but for others it's a well-priced vehicle to more sounds and greater versatility, and the two guitars we've selected for review here represent that ethos in a completely contradictory nutshell.

First up is the Paranormal Jazzmaster XII. Yes, you read that correctly, it's an offset 12-string electric, which, at any other price, would likely epitomise the word 'niche', but here it sees itself flung back in contention thanks to the sort of price tag that will take a guitar of this ilk from 'I can't justify it' to 'Worth a punt!'

Next, at the other end of the spectrum, is the Paranormal Nashville Stratocaster, which takes the familiar Strat outline and populates it with features from everyone's favourite 'versatile guitar', the Telecaster. Two very different beasts, indeed. However, there are some constants across the entire Paranormal range when it comes to the base platform these guitars are built on. For example, there's the poplar body – a softer wood that is often overlooked thanks to its lack of visual appeal, although burled poplar does appear on some higher-end guitars – and the maple neck/laurel fingerboard combination with a 648mm (25.5-inch) scale length, a 241mm (9.5-inch) fingerboard radius, 21 medium-tall frets and Fender-designed pickups.

Now, this isn't the first time a Fender-owned brand has put its name to a 12-string electric, not least an offset one. The Electric XII launched in 1965, complete with an offset body as well as that (large enough to make your Starcaster blush) 'hockey stick' headstock, also seen on Fender's Villager acoustics.

The Electric XII was only in production until 1969, but that didn't stop it from finding its way into the hands of the likes of Jimmy Page (yes, you can hear it on Stairway...), Jeff Beck and Pete Townshend. Eric Clapton even got in on the action during his Cream days, and it just about passed the test of 12-string obsessives The Byrds, then signed to CBS, when a pre-tambourine/harmonica-touting Gene Clark used one for the band's performance of Mr Tambourine Man on TV show Hullabaloo.

The Squier Jazzmaster XII is a model in its own right, though, with Alnico Jazzmaster pickups replacing the split single coils and a simplified three-position toggle switch serving up the expected neck/both/bridge configuration. Talking of the bridge, Squier has used a hybrid of through-body stringing for the bass strings and top-loaded anchoring for their accompanying trebles. Intonation is handled in pairs, but there are adjustment screws to alter the individual string heights. Ours arrived nicely set up and buzz-free, without any adjustment required.

If you've never played a 12-string before, this guitar is going to be something of a revelation. Everything you've heard about sweet, chiming, natural chorus is true, and it's an effect that really needs to be experienced to fully grasp. This translates in the neck position with hi-fi like clarity, all bass and highs, that's addictive when played clean. Flip to the bridge position, however, and it's a bit like going back in time with mid-rich, 60s-style tones that poke through with a bit of crunch and take on a swampy Americana vibe with a bit of added gain. Nevertheless, it's the middle position where we found the most jangle, with the blended pickups seemingly introducing even more of the most organic chorusing you can get. Unusually, it's almost an entirely plug 'n' play guitar, with very little need to adjust the controls once you've selected your pickup.

The Nashville Stratocaster isn't the first time we've seen Fender hybridise Leo's two most popular designs, either. While the Player Plus series saw the concept introduced with a Tele shape, here,

the Squier designers have opted to go with the Strat outline, except it's double-bound, just like a Custom Telecaster. Sticking with that theme, there's no belly carve and no forearm contour. It's got a Strat headstock, but beyond that it's swaying more towards the Telecaster side of its DNA with a Tele scratchplate, three-saddle bridge and that all-familiar Tele control plate.

That is, until you reach for the selector switch. The lever has five positions like you'll find on a Stratocaster, giving you: bridge; middle and bridge; middle; middle and neck; and neck-only positions. But it doesn't stop there because there's a pull-switch on the tone control that engages the neck pickup in positions 1 and 2, totalling seven selectable voicings.

The three main positions perform as you might expect, just not how you might have heard in this combination. The neck pickup delivers a thick, thumpy low-end coupled with a snappy attack at the top that we found to be home for everything from Jimi-style rhythm to Texas lead, and with a bit of a bump in the gain we're firmly in Tom Morello riff territory. The middle position (a Strat pickup) obviously removes the deep, woody sound and swaps it for a bit more of a honk, which works great for vintage soul rhythm sounds when played clean. Then the neck pickup is back in Tele-firma, more open, more bite and a lot of twang. But that's to be expected.

What was most surprising was engaging the neck pickup in positions alongside the bridge single coil. It introduces a similar response as a well-set compressor, culminating in a stronger attack and squashier feel that bizarrely gives the impression of increased string tension. With the switch engaged, it feels like you can hit the strings harder with a more controlled sound. It's here that it truly lives up to its name, pumping out biting picked notes that country and funk players will love, without becoming shrill.

With so many brands applying their names to East Asian-made instruments, we think the perception of Squier – much like rival Epiphone – has probably changed in recent years. It's no longer the 'entry-level one', and guitars such as these are the proof. Asking guitar designers to come up with something different could result in a dog's dinner of ideas that don't work, but here Squier has made a stew that people are likely to want to eat.

The Jazzmaster XII is unlikely to be anyone's all-day guitar, but it solves a problem and gives access to a world of fun tones that may otherwise not be discovered by many players who don't want to risk forking out. Meanwhile, the Custom Nashville Stratocaster model is a triumphant display of repurposing. Is it a do-it-all guitar? 'Do-most-things' more like, and if you're playing R&B, blues, country or funk in any combination, it's got an expansive vocabulary.

▶ VERDICT

Specialist guitars were once the province of big spenders, but the Squier Paranormal series recklessly abandons that ethos. These are great-quality axes with a unique take on classic shapes.

▶ PROS

- Enormous value
- The Strat is very versatile
- Gorgeous

▶ CONS

- Restringing and tuning is time consuming on the Jazzmaster

▶ CONTACT

FENDER MUSIC AUSTRALIA
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Music Man Luke 4 SSS Steve Lukather Signature Model

Did the world's most versatile electric guitar design just get better? **Review by Steve Henderson**

For nearly three decades, Music Man Guitars have been producing a "Luke" model – a signature model designed in collaboration with guitarist/vocalist/songwriter Steve Lukather, the drive behind Toto and Ringo Starr's All-Starr Band, and one of the most recorded guitarists in history, thanks to his extensive first-call studio career. Michael Jackson, Joni Mitchell, Eric Clapton, Randy Crawford, The Tubes, Olivia Newton-John, Alice Cooper, Jackson Browne, Cher, Lionel Richie, Chaka Khan, Barbra Streisand, Brian Cadd, Joe Cocker...the list goes on. Even the incomparable Chet Atkins has utilised Luke's talent and innate intuition. Take a listen to Lionel Richie's 'Running With The Night' or Olivia's 'Physical' or anything by Toto (especially the solo on 'Rosanna') or Boz Scaggs' 'Breakdown Dead Ahead' (my vote for best solo ever on a pop record). He even played bass and rhythm on 'Beat It'. So, when Music Man creates a new "Luke" model, it's worth taking a good look, because he knows his stuff.

The Luke "template" has always been a double cut with a whammy and SSH pickups, either EMGs or DiMarzios. This new guitar, the Luke 4 SSS, has, as the name suggests, three single coils for a more traditional tone. This review instrument is presented in Scoville Red (a wine red kinda-sunburst) with a flamed maple neck and rosewood fingerboard. The maple neck is torrified so the maple is darker, and the oil and wax finish creates a deep honey colour that highlights the figure.

The body is alder (very traditional) but it's also roasted. The torrification process dries out the timber so that it's stronger, more stable, and more resonant. It's a method that is being employed more often these days, even on mid-priced guitars, as a way of ageing the timber, which would normally take place over many years. With its black-on-red livery, the Luke 4 SSS looks like it means some pretty serious business.

All that is fine and good, but how does it sound? Well, strummed unplugged, the Luke 4 is loud. You can feel it resonate against your ribs. Plugging into a tweed Bassman, these pickups produce super-authentic single coil tones. The front pickup is round and woody, with that bold attack that works so well for rhythm parts. The middle pickup by itself is a brighter version of the neck, but a touch hollow in the mids, while the bridge

"The output is high gain (even without the boost) and there's plenty of juice to drive the front end of your amp or your favourite drive pedal"

pickup – and here's a surprise – is actually a useful sound. It has a thick robustness which sounds more like a Tele than a Strat. But the "in between" sounds are what we're really after, and they sound mighty: throaty and warm at the same time. Snap the strings for more attack and you'll hear that slightly compressed quack that everyone loves. All with no noise!

In spite of the absence of that familiar hum, these single coils really are single coils – not humbuckers in disguise. However, Music Man have a proprietary dummy coil that works with any pickup combination to retain all of the single coil character and none of the noise. The output is high gain (even without the boost) and there's plenty of juice to drive the front end of your amp or your favourite drive pedal. Even the Bassman crunches nicely, without excessive volume, and a 50w Marshall JCM-800 leans effortlessly into a great distorted rhythm grind. Another surprise was how these single coils work so nicely with a Boogie's lead channel: smooth and rich, but without the midrange hump. Even into an old Zendrive or a Flux-Five, the Luke 4 sustained like it had humbuckers. Overdrive is one thing, but single coils often crash and burn through distortion effects due to the lack of mids. But, through an old DS-1 and a Suhr Riot, the Luke 4 delivered substantial crunch. Play Blackmore's 'Smoke On The Water' riff and you'll get the idea. And all this without engaging the 12db boost.

The Luke 4 has some familiar Music Man features: a super-playable neck, the rounded, slightly smaller Strat-ish body, the 4+2 headstock, the smooth and accurate whammy, an easy access battery compartment (for the adjustable boost), and the high quality hardware. The 5-way and knobs feel positive and the machine heads are locking Schallers. Everything works – from the superb fretwork to the perfect neck pocket.

As with all Music Man instruments I've encountered, the Luke 4 arrived perfectly set-up and ready to rock. I didn't need to reach for the tools or change strings. And it arrived in a gig bag, but not just any gig bag. It's really a case made from light-weight, high compression foam, covered in a tough denier material. The Luke 4 SSS is a serious instrument and the perfect blend of working guitar and family heirloom.

VERDICT

Well done to the artisans at Music Man for building what may be the perfect 3-pickup double cut. The only issue I have with it is that I have to give it back.

PROS

- Beautifully made
- Great facilities
- Great tones and feel

CONS

- Not a thing

CONTACT

CMC MUSIC
Ph: (02) 9905 2511
Web: www.cmcmusic.com.au

RRP: $ 2,099

Cort GB Modern 4

A seriously professional bass with a great set of features. Where have they been hiding this one? Review by **Steve Henderson**

Cort Guitars is one of the world's major fretted instrument manufacturers. Not only do they make Cort-branded instruments but they build instruments for quite a few other companies. For their own marque, the catalogue is incredibly diverse, with everything from high-quality "first" guitars to excellent pro-level instruments. As well as the usual tried-and-true designs, the luthiers at Cort have created some instruments that have very practical, innovative features while still remaining comfortably familiar.

The Cort GB Modern 4 bass is just such an instrument. Clearly, it's been inspired by Fender's Jazz Bass (off-set waist, block inlays, slim neck, twin pickups) but cosmetically, it has a bit of an Alembic vibe happening, too. All that burled poplar looks fabulous, but it also looks heavy (or is that just my "Alembicphobia" materialising!). But, taking it from its very flash gig bag reveals a much lighter bass than I expected, weighing in at around 3.5kg, which is certainly no heavier that a Jazz Bass. That poplar is actually a thick veneer (like the maple top on a Les Paul) hiding a maple core between paulownia wings. Paulownia is an East Asian timber that is used more and more for solid-body instruments. It's very light, very stable and best of all, very resonant. Bolted on to this is a torrefied maple neck and fingerboard with a 34" scale, 22 frets with a 15.75" radius, and a 1.5" nut width that J Bass players will love. Roasting the maple neck makes it dryer, lighter, and stiffer, which are all very good qualities for any neck, but especially one as long and thin as this one.

So far, it's just a tricked up Jazz Bass, but plugging into a MarkBass Little Marcus connected to a Harkte 410, the Modern 4 starts to reveal its secrets. The pickups are single coils but they are a soapbar design made by Nordstrand Audio (from California) and, as such, they listen to a broader area of each string to produce a fatter tone. Add to that a very clever control layout: two tone circuits, but not in a clumsy Jazzmaster way. There's the standard 3-knob setup - volume 1, volume 2 and tone – which is very familiar and easy to work with. Then, pull on the tone knob and you've engaged an active 3-band EQ circuit that is super-interactive, meaning there are no soft spots from bass to mids to treble. Push down on the tone knob and you're back to the standard J Bass control circuit. The two volume knobs are active the whole time, so the tone and EQ knobs are switchable pre-set tonal options. The active preamp is a special MarkBass circuit: super low noise, super low current draw on the 9v battery, and it doesn't colour the tone of the pickups. The output is big, bold and consistent across the Modern 4's range.

Standing or seated, the Modern 4 is well balanced. Cort have gone to some detail to give it this comfortable balance: aluminium Hipshot Ultralite tuners and Babicz bridge, and the roasted neck is a little lighter than a regular maple neck. The neck's stability and resonance is evident as soon as you play through the 22 frets. Every note sounds even and loud (even unplugged), and the neck resonates against your palm. I couldn't find any dead spots, where a note might drop out a little: it all seems very consistent. The slim neck is a dream to play and there's no struggle with arpeggios. The only negative (and this is just cosmetic) was that I thought the side dots were a weird colour...until I walked into the studio control room where the lights were dim. The dots glow in the dark. How cool is that?

Through the MarkBass/Hartke system there's a sweet top end and articulate mids. Best of all, the soapbars produce an organic low-end thud, which sounds more like a Stingray than a J Bass. Switching between the pickups delivers two distinct versions of the tonal range, and activating the active EQ offers a myriad of subtle and not-so-subtle tones. If you're into funk, roll off the mids and you'll hear that woody hollowness that pokes through the mix so easily. Go to the passive circuit and it's ready to rock, but with a thicker tone that a J Bass and a bit brighter than a P Bass. Strum a power chord and there's a tight directness about the sound. I even plugged the Modern 4 into an old EVTL cab with a GT tune amp and that gave it much more of a jazz attitude, more like an Ampeg fliptop. The tone was much more defined and contained, but still very even across the frequency range. But, even unplugged, the Modern 4 is toneful. I sat around playing it way quite often.

There are plenty of basses available but the Cort Modern 4 is a seriously professional instrument with a great set of features. It's utilitarian in its facilities but super-cool at the same time. ag

▶ VERDICT

The Modern 4 is so much fun to play and such great value, it's hard to find a reasonable comparison. And it looks fabulous.

▶ PROS

- Superb build quality
- Plays and sounds great
- Broad tonal range
- Pro features all around

▶ CONS

- None

▶ CONTACT

DYNAMIC MUSIC
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Laney IRF-Leadtop and Laney IRF-Dualtop

Laney adds a pair of compact solid-state heads to its popular Ironheart Foundry range with switchable power and all the connectivity you need for stage, recording and practice. **Review by Nick Guppy**

The small and portable amp trend continues apace. Following on from the success of its highly acclaimed Ironheart Foundry Loudpedal, Laney has now added two new solid-state heads that borrow from the Loudpedal's design: the single-channel Ironheart Foundry Leadtop and the more feature-rich Ironheart Foundry Dualtop.

The Leadtop and Dualtop are built to Laney's typically high standards, with heavy duty black vinyl over MDF sleeves and recessed grab handles for easy carrying. They look smart, too, with a silver Laney badge mounted on a tough front-facing steel grille that's backlit with deep red LEDs. Both heads use an external 24-volt laptop-style adaptor for power, making them very portable as there are no heavy transformers.

The Leadtop is a stripped-down single-channel design but with some options that add unexpected versatility. There's a stompbox-style footswitchable boost circuit that sits at the very front of the signal chain, with its own level control. This feeds a preamp that can be preset to run in Clean or Lead modes, with Gain and Volume controls and a conventional three-band passive EQ, augmented with a three-position voicing switch, which offers Bright, Flat and Dark options. In Lead mode, the Gain and Volume controls are active; switching to Clean mode bypasses the Gain control for increased headroom.

On the rear panel there's a cabinet-emulated headphones jack and an aux in on 3.5mm jacks, with full-sized 6.4mm sockets for the Leadtop's transformer-buffered series effects loop, with a send outlet that can double as a line out. The jack socket accepts a single-button footswitch to remotely control the boost function and a single speaker jack, with a small toggle switch that drops the Leadtop's 60 watts of power down to one watt for home use.

The slightly larger Dualtop is more of a straight reimagining of the IRF Loudpedal. Again, there's a footswitchable boost up front but this time feeding two channels, each with Gain and Volume controls. A three-way toggle switch on Channel 1 offers a choice of symmetrical or asymmetrical clipping, plus a clean option, with Bright, Flat or Dark voicing options on Channel 2, the Dualtop's dedicated lead channel. Both channels feed a passive three-band EQ, and the Dualtop's digital reverb, which is based on Laney's Black Country Custom Secret Path reverb pedal.

Laney makes full use of the Dualtop's wider rear panel, adding a balanced DI output on XLR, with a ground lift and a slider switch that selects two custom IRs with a bypass option. Like the Leadtop, the Dualtop also features 3.5mm jacks for and aux in, with full-sized jacks for the series effects loop and a single speaker outlet with switchable power levels. The Dualtop's footswitch jack takes a two-button switch that toggles the channels and boost function.

Both amps look ready to rock, with smart, easily read control panels and LED indicators for boost and channel status. Our only minor gripe is the lack of cable security to prevent the DC power plug from being accidentally pulled out: it's a snug fit, but a small cleat to loop the cable around would give extra peace of mind.

Both amps start up smoothly without any thumps; there's very little hum or hiss, too, thanks to the separate PSU and high-quality components on the circuit boards. The Leadtop's reduced control layout is deceptively simple. In practice, there's a wealth of great tone that's easily accessed once you've got a handle on how the knobs interact. Fat Tweed-inspired cleans at lower gain levels transition to a scorching high-gain lead voice that's somewhere between USA and British tones, which is great for metal and modern rock and easily dialled in for humbuckers or single coils using the voicing switch.

While there's no channel-changing facility available, the footswitchable boost gets you most of the way there. We found an ideal setup with our Strat when used with a low-ish gain lead mode setting for clean/crunch rhythm and kicking in the boost for leads.

The extra versatility of the Dualtop's twin channels means less compromise between rhythm and lead duty; Channel 1 delivers the same punchy cleans together with a choice of symmetrical or asymmetrical clipping types. Usually, this refers to the number of diodes used in the clipping circuit, with even numbers for symmetrical and odd numbers for asymmetrical. The two clipping types have different responses, with asymmetrical coming across as being looser and more touch-sensitive, while symmetrical produces a harder, more compressed vibe.

The Dualtop's lead channel is the same as the Leadtop's, with thick, multi-layered distortion that's easily tamed via the voicing switch to suit single coils or humbuckers. The Dualtop benefits from reverb to add depth and ambience, and while you can only adjust the effect level, it's a decent overall sound. The DI output is more or less noise-free, with two built-in IRs to approximate 4x12 and 1x12 cabinets, plus there's a dry option if you want other IR loaders.

If you're after a compact, lightweight head with enough punch to handle live gigs, then Laney's new additions are definitely worth a look. They're compact and very portable, and, despite the metal bias, both heads offer a wide range of tones that fit many different genres. The pricing is highly competitive, too, making both the Leadtop and Dualtop ideal as 'first serious amp' choices. They might be solid-state, but they possess valve-like dynamics helped by a punchy 60-watt power stage that will easily cope with any size of gig.

▶ VERDICT

Aimed at players of all levels, the new Leadtop and Dualtop are great value for money and could turn out to be bestsellers in the solid-state market.

▶ PROS

- Both amps are compact, affordable, with highly usable tones
- Both look great, with plenty of metal cred at a budget price

▶ CONS

- The Leadtop isn't super versatile, but it's also cheap
- The lack of restraint for the power lead on the Dualtop

▶ CONTACT

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RRP: $3,299

Orange OR30H head

The first offering from Orange in a while highlights some very cool features such as a footswitchable solo volume control and a valve rectifier. Review by **Nick Guppy**

It's been a dire time for the music industry over the past few years. Orange has been quieter than usual, like most amp manufacturers. However, confidence is climbing and once more we're seeing new models being announced, including this much-anticipated British-made head, the new OR30H.

While Orange's well-known steel-jacketed Tiny Terror was one of the first compact and lightweight heads, arguably kickstarting the 'small and portable' trend, it's fair to say most people's perception of Orange is the big, heavy picture-frame plywood cabinet surrounding an armour-plated steel chassis. The OR30H just makes it into the lighter end of that category, with a heavy white-enamelled steel chassis surrounded by a thick birch ply sleeve.

Our sample is covered in Orange's alternative black vinyl and finished to a typically high standard, with a smart gold-trimmed carry handle set off by two neatly inlaid lines of gold piping.

Essentially an OR15H on steroids, the OR30H boasts a quad-EL84 power stage driven by typically outsized transformers but with a GZ34 rectifier valve instead of the OR15H's silicon diodes. Inside, most of the electronics are held on one large high-quality PCB, including all the front-panel controls and valve bases. A smaller PCB strip holds the rear-panel jack sockets, which have gold-plated contacts to prevent corrosion. All the wiring is neatly twisted and bundled to keep noise pickup to a minimum.

The control panel features Orange's 'pics only' graphics, which first appeared in 1972 and add to this amp's bell-bottomed vintage appeal. From left to right, there's a presence control followed by two master volume knobs, the first of which is footswitchable, allowing for easy level-boosts for solos. A trio of smaller knobs handle the passive bass, mid and treble EQ, followed by the all-important gain control and a bright switch, which is a first for Orange. This switch has two bright options, with a centre off.

On the rear panel, there's a trio of speaker outlets and a send/return for the OR30H's valve-buffered effects loop, together with a jack for the foot-switched second master volume control. Lastly, a Headroom/Bedroom toggle switch varies the output power from a full-throated 30 watts down to just two watts, for home or studio use. Overall, the OR30H is a typical modern Orange, with instantly recognisable looks and sound, built to handle anything the road can throw at it.

There's a big in-rush of current to the OR30H's power supply that you can almost feel as well as hear when the mains toggle is switched on. Flip the standby switch (renamed on this amp as a 'warmup' switch), and the OR30H comes alive without any appreciable hiss or hum. It takes a few minutes for voltages to stabilise properly on a valve-rectified circuit, after which the OR30H is ready to rock.

And rock is what the OR30H excels at, with a fat midrange that instantly evokes the heady days of the early 1970s. This is easily balanced with the OR30H's smooth passive EQ and a clever 'cross-line' presence control, which has the same effect no matter where the master volumes sit. The ingenious bright switch has two options: one is a subtle notch that enhances highs without affecting anything else, while the other option has a broader effect, more in line with the typical bright switch function found on most vintage amps.

Armed with just these two simple enhancements and the footswitchable second master volume, the OR30H is capable of flattering any guitar, with a gain range that runs from subtle blues to full-on Brit rock saturation. Played at typical gig levels, the valve-rectified power supply sweetens what might otherwise be a stiff and unforgiving response, adding fluid, bouncy dynamics that make the amp feel alive and reactive to the slightest nuance.

Amplifiers such as this often have a tendency to put fluffed notes under a magnifying glass, and yet the OR30H seems to do the reverse, making it easier to pull off tricks like harmonic squeals and controlled feedback. You'll hear more of the fundamental with single coils like a Strat, while a decent Les Paul thickens things up for an almost fuzzbox-like distortion. At low to medium gain settings it's great for reproducing many 1970s classic riffs, from Led Zep, Free and early Fleetwood Mac, while maxing out the gain will take you into 90s-era Britpop along with many modern blues-rock players.

Another cool trick is to turn the OR30H into a non-master volume amp by setting both master volumes to 10 and using the gain knob to control loudness. This will bring the clarity of the OR30H's massive power supply to the fore, turning the head into a superb pedal platform, with headroom that some 50- or even 100-watt amps would have difficulty matching. Modulation, delay and reverb effects work particularly well in the OR30H's valve-buffered series effects loops, while a wah and fuzz plugged into the input jack will provide all the vintage mojo you need.

Orange's OR30H is a serious tone machine that's equally at home with modern rock, vintage covers or blues. Single coils and humbuckers both sound great thanks to the versatile bright switch and presence controls, and there's plenty of volume to handle any size of gig. Compared with Class D amps that weigh no more than a packet of cigs and take up similar room, the OR30H is a behemoth, albeit a relatively portable one that can be teamed with any size of speaker cabinet. ag

▶ VERDICT

It's not the cheapest 30-watt valve amp out there, but you're buying into quality; the OR30H is made in the UK and built to give its lucky owner a lifetime of great British tone.

▶ PROS

- Relatively compact; cleverly designed
- Does a lot with a simple circuit; tonally versatile; outstanding pedal platform

▶ CONS

- A hefty lift
- No DI output
- A bit on the pricey side for a single-channel head

▶ CONTACT

AUSTRALIS MUSIC GROUP
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Vox MV50-BM Brian May Limited Edition Set

A highly anticipated signature version of Vox's unique Nutube micro head, approved by Brian May himself. **Review by Nick Guppy**

If you're talking signature guitar tones, we'd wager there's none more instantly recognisable than that of Brian May. Ever since Queen's debut album five decades ago, a whole industry has grown up around 'that sound', with guitars, amps and effects all vying for the attention of hordes of Queen enthusiasts who want to replicate it.

Aside from the 'Red Special', May's unique homemade guitar, the other main component is, of course, the Vox AC30, which May plugs into via a variety of treble boosters. Now there's a special Brian May signature version of Vox's highly portable MV50 micro head, which includes a built-in treble booster circuit by Knight Audio Technologies, one of the most well-known Queen equipment specialists, with Sir Brian himself among its customers.

Introduced back in 2017, Vox's typically innovative MV50 was one of the first guitar amps to capitalise on the small size and weight of Class D amplification, combined with a clever valve substitute called the Nutube 6P1. Developed by Vox's parent company Korg, the Nutube is a twin triode using vacuum fluorescent display tech to amplify audio just like a regular 12AX7 but in a more compact and less power-hungry package. The result is highly authentic valve-like tone with enough power for any gig, from a head that's no larger than many stompboxes.

The MV50-BM edition has been designed in collaboration with May himself and features an eye-catching 'Red Special' paint job that's been carried over to the matching BC108 speaker cabinet, available as a Limited Edition Set, with other Brian May goodies to sweeten the deal.

The MV50-BM sounds very similar to the regular AC version until you kick the integrated KAT treble booster into action. We've said before that the standard MV50 AC model does an uncanny job of replicating a full-size AC30 but doesn't quite get the heavier compressed Brian May tones. The KAT treble boost is the missing link that makes this possible, and with everything on 10, it's pretty much instant Queen at Wembley and nearly as loud, besides looking the part, too.

You can buy the MV50-BM signature head on its own, but we think the smart money will be heading for this Limited Edition Set, which includes the matching BC108 cab, plus postcards and a keychain. Most importantly, though, if your daily practice routine starts with *We Will Rock You*, this is the sound.

▶ VERDICT

A brilliant, compact and affordable amp for May tragics and neophytes, with more volume than seems feasible and unswervingly strict dedication to the May sonic range.

▶ PROS

- A version of the MV50 that nails the classic Queen sounds
- Super compact and portable
- Jaw-dropping volume and tone

▶ CONS

- Can get a bit noisy at higher gain settings with treble booster engaged
- External laptop-style power supply must be handled with care

▶ CONTACT

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Boss DM-101 Delay Machine

Running eight BBD chips under digital control, has Boss come up with the ultimate analogue delay? **Review by Trevor Curwen**

RRP: $779

Fans of bucket brigade analogue delay were delighted when Boss revisited its DM-2 pedal to create the Waza Craft DM-2W a few years ago – and now there's something that may get them even more excited. The DM-101 offers that all-important BBD sound but adds some digital control features to greatly expand the ways you can use it. With no less than eight BBD chips onboard, the pedal offers 12 different modes created by the switching of multiple internal circuit elements, including the number of active BBDs and their connection order as well as low-pass filter settings and clocking rates. Stereo output is available in six of the modes and four presets are directly available via the front panel and footswitches, although MIDI users get access to 127.

Using this pedal is easy – everything is set up by the front panel knobs, buttons and footswitches, with no menus to navigate. Three adjacent knobs set up the standard delay parameters of Delay Time, Intensity (Feedback) and Delay Volume (dry/wet mix), although you also get a Tap Tempo footswitch to alternatively set the delay time, coupled to a range of tap divisions. A set of three other knobs modify the sound – you get Modulation Rate and Depth, plus a Variation knob that adjusts a parameter that's directly related to the selected mode such as the modulation waveform shape in the case of the Classic, Vintage and Modern modes.

Classic mode is a traditional analogue delay sound, albeit one that has been extended to have a maximum delay time of 1,200ms to cover a host of eventualities. This is in contrast to the Vintage mode, which is an emulation of the DM-2 pedal with a maximum delay of just 300ms like the original pedal. Consequently, it's a little easier to dial in your desired slapback and other short delays with the Time knob.

It's the sound of the repeats that's the crucial feature in any analogue delay, and Boss has got these voiced very naturally here – they're fat, grainy and dark with the ability to slide into place as a natural component of your guitar tone, having just the right amount of degradation as they trail off into the distance.

Both of these modes have access to modulation, and as you might expect from Boss it's done to perfection, whether you want a bit of tape-like wobble, classic chorus or full-on rotary speaker effect. There's also plenty of flavouring via the Variation knob cycling through the waveform shapes. Modern mode offers pretty much more of the same but has a max 840ms delay time and features repeats that have a little more clarity in the top-end, being useful for, say, the kind of rhythmic repeats that you need to be prominent. Multi-Head mode is an emulation of a tape delay with four heads, 10 different head patterns being available from the Variation knob. If you were thinking a Space Echo pedal might be your thing, this offers a viable alternative, albeit with BBD sound, rather than tape emulation. Of the last two mono delays, Non-Linear offers repeats that gradually increase in volume, while the Ambience mode recreates a small space with the Variation knob adjusting early reflections.

The stereo modes still have viable uses in mono mode, offering some interesting alternatives to what's gone before, but they really come into their own when unfolded in a true stereo spread. There's plenty here that offers spaciousness. Wide mode has offset left and right delay times, with the Variation knob adjusting the offset between the two. Pan is a tapped delay with different delay times distributed across the sound field, and Dual Mod offers different modulation phase settings on the left and right outputs all set up with the Variation knob. Reflect mode gives you reverb with pre-delay adjusted with the variation knob, Doubling+Delay is self-explanatory, while Pattern is like the stereo sibling of Multi-Head with 10 pattern types available from the Variation knob letting you put together rhythmically sequenced repeats.

For live use, the tap tempo comes into its own, and the Memory footswitch will let you scroll through the four onboard memories, although you should be aware that the very nature of BBD delays precludes any carryover of repeats when switching from one memory to the next. Carryover (trails) is an option, though, when you hit the Bypass button, allowing the delay to die naturally, rather than be cut abruptly. There is provision to add an extra footswitch to increase switching functionality, but many users would likely prefer to use the single jack for plugging in an expression pedal for parameter control – especially if they relish ramping the intensity up and down, something that sounds fantastic here.

While analogue delay might have had its heyday for a few short years as the 1970s turned into the 80s between the demise of tape echoes and the coming onstream of affordable digital delay, it still exerts a fascination for many guitar players. If that's you, then this pedal provides the most variation in the use of that sound that is currently available.

The price could be a stumbling block, and some will be miffed they can't run a stereo modulation pedal in front of it. But there's a musicality to this pedal with a natural warmth in the way the repeats are implemented and mesh with guitar tone. In a traditional signal chain, it is possible that Classic mode has everything that many would want in an analogue delay – with straight analogue delay sound up to 1,200ms coupled with gorgeous modulation. But there's so much more than that here. ag

▶ VERDICT

Boss' designers have taken the analogue sound and put it in the sort of settings we've come to expect from multi-mode digital delays and that's something quite special. Embrace it, explore it and add a different dimension to your tone.

▶ PROS

- Very intuitive to use
- Genuine BBD sound in new contexts
- Stereo options

▶ CONS

- Mono input only
- No spillover when footswitching presets

▶ CONTACT

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HOW I WROTE...

"NO MORE TEARS"

ZAKK WYLDE REVEALS HOW A STUDIO JAM – AND THE RANDY RHOADS SCHOOL OF SOLOING – PAVED THE WAY FOR OZZY OSBOURNE'S IMMORTAL 1991 TRACK.

BY MARK MCSTEA

Zakk Wylde and Ozzy Osbourne pose in Tokyo, early 1989.

Zakk Wylde knew he had big shoes to fill when he joined Ozzy Osbourne's band in 1987. Tony Iommi, Randy Rhoads and Jake E. Lee had preceded him as Ozzy's guitarists, and each had proven influential to his own playing. Wylde quickly found his footing, both as Osbourne's guitarist and songwriting foil, co-creating the nine cuts on the singer's 1988 album, No Rest for the Wicked. But perhaps no song in their shared canon stands as tall as "No More Tears," the title track from Ozzy's 1991 album, the second studio effort to feature Wylde. A large part of the record's success was Wylde's distinctive guitar work, a mix of grinding riffs and his signature pinch harmonics. But as the guitarist points out, it was all done in service of the song. "The song always comes first for Ozzy," he says. "That was an important reminder for me when it came to making 'No More Tears.'"

JAM PACKED

As Wylde recalls, "No More Tears" virtually wrote itself in rehearsals for the album sessions with bassist Mike Inez, drummer Randy Castillo and keyboardist John Sinclair. "Mike was actually the instigator of the whole song," Wylde explains. "He came up with the bass line. Then Randy came in on the drums, exactly like it was on the record. They were just jamming on that groove, and then, again just like the record, John Sinclair came in with the keyboard line, so it was already sounding really great from the moment it was created. I had a slide with me, and I was thinking about all those bands like Lynyrd Skynyrd and Molly Hatchet that I liked, which was what inspired the slide lines that I started playing — almost like a 'Freebird' feel. What's funny is that the way we jammed it is almost exactly how it came out on the record."

Osbourne was quick to see the potential in what they had created. "Ozzy started singing some words as we were working through it, and then I came up with the riffs that answered his lines," Wylde explains. The crescendo leading into the solo took a little more work. "We took some time to figure out how to go into that big change in the middle for the buildup and then break down before my solo. It was all routined before we got into the studio.

I'd started to come up with some ideas on the piano, and John was playing around with different inversions on the synth. I think it's really arresting the way that everything just drops out and then comes back with the piano. It takes the song somewhere else for a moment."

"I COULDN'T BELIEVE SOMETHING THAT LONG COULD BE A SINGLE. BUT HELL, WHAT DO I KNOW?"

RANDY RHOADS STYLE

Despite Inez's role in the song's creation, the bass part was recorded by Ozzy's longtime collaborator, Bob Daisley. As for Wylde, when it came time to lay down his solo, he knew he needed to pull something special out of the bag. "I was wondering where I was going to go with the solo," he says. "It's a blues-based syncopated solo, but I really sat and worked on the crescendo parts to get something that totally clicked."

Wylde is a big fan of the written guitar solo, where the nuances are pre-planned and carefully constructed. "That's the Randy Rhoads school of soloing, where you sit and compose the solo. Things like 'Hotel California' or 'You Shook Me All Night Long' — you can't play the song without playing the solo exactly as it was recorded. I usually get a homework CD of a track so I can work on it until I get something I'm happy with."

The gear that Wylde used for the song was his standard rig at that time. "It was just my Les Paul through a Marshall JCM800 2203 and cabinets fitted with 75-watt Celestions. The solo was just the one guitar.
I didn't double track or anything. I didn't use anything too fancy for the Ozzy records."

"TEARS" OF JOY

Considering that "No More Tears" tracks in at more than seven minutes, Wylde was as surprised as anyone when it was chosen to be a single. He was even more shocked when the nearly six-minute edited version became a hit.

"I couldn't believe something even that long could be a single," he says. "But hell, what do I know? I didn't think it was an exceptional track when we finished it. [The No More Tears cut] 'Mama, I'm Coming Home' stood out as an obvious single. I sure as hell didn't realize this would be the one song that people would always ask me about." ag

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